

*AN AMBASSADOR'S  
MEMOIRS By Maurice  
Paléologue · (Last French Ambassador to  
the Russian Court)*

TRANSLATED BY F. A. HOLT, O.B.E.

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## CHAPTER I

AUGUST 19—SEPTEMBER 18, 1916



# AMBASSADOR'S MEMOIRS

## VOL. III

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### CHAPTER I

AUGUST 19—SEPTEMBER 18, 1916

The Empress's *camarilla*: the direction in which she endeavours to influence Russian diplomacy.—The Salonica army ties down the Bulgarians on the Macedonian front in order to cover the mobilization of the Rumanian army.—The political education of Nicholas II: "The Emperor will always be Pobiedonostzev's pupil!"—Victories of the Russian army in Upper Armenia.—The Empress and Sturmer; he treats her as the regent.—Exhaustion of the Russian forces on the Galician front.—One of the Russian regiments sent to France mutinies at Marseilles.—The arrest of Manuilov, director of Sturmer's secretariat.—*Ennui*, the chronic disease of Russian society.—Influence of the Jewish question on relations between Russia and America.—The perilous situation of Rumania; the action at Turtukai; invasion of the Dobrudja; the Russian General Staff studies the possibility of sending an army to help in the Danube region.—The strategic plan of Marshal Hindenburg.—Rasputin and Sturmer; their conferences in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul.—Russian notions of time and space.

*Saturday, August 19, 1916.*

During the last few days I have had many talks with persons of all shades of opinion. When I sum up all they tell me—and, even more, what they do not tell me—I arrive at the following conclusions.

Without the Emperor's approval or knowledge, the Empress's *camarilla* is endeavouring to influence Russian diplomacy in a new direction, i.e., preparing the ground for a reconciliation with Germany. The predominating motive is fear, the fear to which the reactionary party is inspired on seeing Russia involved in so close and prolonged an association with the democratic powers of the West; I have referred to this matter several times before.

There is also the community of industrial and commercial interests which existed before the war between Germany and Russia and which many are anxious to re-establish. And again there is the poor result of the recent offensive of the Russian armies on the Dvina, a result which proves that the military resistance of Germany is far from being exhausted. On the other hand, the successes in Galicia and Armenia have popularized the idea that the profits of the war must be made at the expense of Austria and Turkey rather than that of Germany.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, August 20, 1916.*

The Salonica army, an army of not less than four hundred thousand men under the command of General Sarrail, is to take the offensive to-day between the Vardar and the Struma, north-west of Seres. As provided by Article 3 of the Bucharest Military Convention, it is an endeavour to hold down the Bulgarians on the Macedonian front in order to cover the mobilization and concentration of the Rumanian army.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, August 22, 1916*

The ex-Minister for Agriculture, Krivoshein, who is undoubtedly the most open-minded and intellectual of the liberal imperialists, was telling me not long ago of the stubborn and invincible resistance opposed by the Emperor to anyone who advises him to allow tsarism to develop in the direction of parliamentary monarchy. He concluded with the depressing remark :

“The Emperor will always be Pobiedonostzev’s pupil !”

Who can doubt that it is to the famous procurator of the Holy Synod, the close friend and colleague of Alexander III, that Nicholas II owes the whole of his political and moral education. An eminent jurist and learned theologian, the fanatical champion of orthodox autocracy, Pobiedonostzev brought to the advocacy of his



reactionary doctrines ardent conviction, exalted patriotism, a lofty and inflexible conscience, culture of an immense range, rare dialectical skill and lastly—though it seems contradictory—unaffected simplicity and great charm of manner and conversation. His whole programme could be summed up in the words “absolutism, nationalism, orthodoxy,” and he pursued its fulfilment with an uncompromising ruthlessness and sovereign scorn of the realities which stood in his path. To him “the modern spirit,” democratic principles and western atheism were necessarily anathema. His stubborn, daily influence left an indelible mark on the impressionable mind of Nicholas II.

In 1896, just at the time when he was completing the political education of his young sovereign, Pobiedonostzev published a volume of *Thoughts*. I have just been reading it, and note the following suggestive reflections:

“One of the most erroneous political principles is that of popular sovereignty, the idea—widespread, unfortunately, since the French Revolution—that all power comes from the people and has its source in the national will. The greatest of the evils of the constitutional system is the formation of ministries on the parliamentary pattern, based on the numerical standing of parties. . . . The body and the spirit cannot be separated. The body and the spirit live one, inseparable life. . . . The atheist state is merely a Utopia, for atheism is the negation of the State. Religion is the spiritual force which creates law. That is why the worst enemies of public order never fail to proclaim that religion is a personal, private affair. . . . The ease with which men allow themselves to be deluded by the commonplaces of popular sovereignty and individual liberty leads to general demoralization and the decay of the political sense. France offers us to-day a striking example of that demoralization and decay; the contagion is already reaching England. . . .”

\* \* \*

*Thursday, August 24, 1916.*

The general offensive which the Salonica army was preparing to open on August 20 was anticipated on the

18th by an audacious attack by the Bulgarians. Their main effort was made on the two extremities of our line, in the Doiran region east of the Vardar, and Western Macedonia south of Monastir. The Serbians were holding the latter sector and the blow was so violent that they have had to fall back for thirty kilometres, thus losing the towns of Florina and Koritza which the enemy at once occupied.

The news has produced great agitation in Bucharest.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, August 27, 1916.*

The Russian army is developing its operations in Upper Armenia in the most brilliant fashion. It has just occupied Mush, west of Lake Van. The Turks are retreating through Bitlis on Mosul.

\* \* \*

*Monday, August 28, 1916.*

Italy declared war on Germany yesterday, thus consummating the breach with Germanism; Rumania has also declared war on Austria-Hungary.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, August 29, 1916.*

A former president of the Council, Kokovtsov, is passing through Petrograd and I called on him this afternoon.

I found him more pessimistic than ever. The dismissal of Sazonov and General Bielaiev has made him extremely uneasy.

"The Empress is now all-powerful," he said. "Sturmer is incapable and vain but astute and shrewd enough when his personal interests are at stake, and had known only too well how to make her serve his purposes. He reports regularly to her, tells her everything, consults her on all points, treats her as the regent and trains her in the notion that as the Emperor has received his power from God he has to account for it to God alone, so that it is sacrilege for anyone to take the liberty of opposing the imperial

will. You can imagine how much an argument of that kind appeals to the brain of a mystic ! Thus it has come about that Khvostov, Krivoshein, General Polivanov, Samarin, Sazonov, General Bielaiev and myself are now regarded as revolutionaries, traitors and infidels ! ”

“Do you think there is no remedy for this state of affairs ? ”

“None ! It’s a tragical situation.”

“‘Tragical’ is rather a strong word, isn’t it ? ”

“Not at all, take my word for it ! It’s a tragical situation. Speaking personally, I’m thankful I’m not a minister now, and have no share of responsibility for the catastrophe which is coming. But as a citizen I weep for my country.”

Tears stood in his eyes. To recover himself he paced the full length of his room two or three times. Then he talked about the Emperor, without a trace of bitterness or recrimination, but in a tone of the deepest melancholy.

“The Emperor is judicious, moderate and hard working. As a rule his ideas are very sensible. He has a lofty idea of his functions and the strongest sense of duty. But his education is inadequate and the scale of the problems it is his mission to solve only too frequently exceeds the measure of his intelligence. He does not know men, affairs or life itself. His distrust of himself and others means that he is always suspicious of superiority, and the result is that he can only tolerate nobodies around him. He is also very religious, in a narrow and superstitious way, and this makes him very jealous of his authority, as he receives it from God.”

We returned to the subject of the Empress :

“I protest with all my might,” he said, “against the infamous rumours that are spread abroad about her relations with Rasputin. She’s the noblest and purest of women. But she’s an invalid, neurotic and a prey to hallucinations : she’ll end up in the frenzy of mysticism and melancholy. I shall never forget the extraordinary things she said to me in September, 1911, when I took the place of the unfortunate Stolypin\* as President of the

---

\* Assassinated at Kiev on September 14, 1911. He was the brother-in-law of M. Sazonov.

Council. I was telling her of the difficulties of my task and quoting the example of my predecessor when she cut me short: 'Don't mention that man's name again, Vladimir Nicolaievitch. He died because Providence had decreed that he should disappear that day. So he's finished with: never mention his name again.' She also refused to pray at his coffin and the Emperor did not condescend to appear at the funeral, all because Stolypin, devoted, wholly and utterly devoted, to his sovereigns though he was, had dared to tell them that some slight reforms were necessary in the social edifice!"

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, August 30, 1916.*

The Salonica army, by vigorous attacks in the region of the Moglenitza and the Beles *massif*, has at last succeeded in tying the Bulgarians down on the Macedonian front. By thus depriving them of the possibilities of strategic movement towards the north, it has entirely fulfilled its mission, a very difficult mission, which was assigned to it by the military convention of August 17.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, August 31, 1916.*

The Russian armies are continuing their advance from the Stokhod to the Carpathians, i.e., on a front of three hundred and fifty kilometres.

But their progress is very slow, a fact which is explained by the weariness of the men and the horses, the growing difficulties of communications, the wastage of artillery and the necessity of economizing in ammunition.

Thus Rumania enters the war at the moment when the Russian offensive is petering out.

\* \* \*

*Friday, September 1, 1916.*

There is great humiliation at General Headquarters and the War Ministry.

The 2nd Russian brigade, which recently arrived in France and was about to embark for Salonica, has mutinied

at Marseilles ; the colonel has been murdered and several officers were wounded. To restore order the vigorous intervention of French troops was required. Severe measures of repression have been taken and about twenty men shot.

I cannot help remembering what Sazonov said to me last December when justifying his opposition to Doumer's request : " When the Russian soldier is off his own soil he's worthless : he goes to pieces at once."

\* \* \*

*Saturday, September 2, 1916.*

Manuilov, the policeman convict whom Sturmer made the director of his secretariat, has just been arrested : he is said to be guilty of blackmailing a bank, a fact which is proved *a priori*, as swindling is his normal method of money-making and the most ordinary and venial of his crimes.

The incident would not have been worth mentioning if the arrest had not been decided upon by the Minister of the Interior, Alexander Khvostov, and carried out without Sturmer's knowledge. So evidently there is something behind it, something more or less scandalous, which we shall hear about before long.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, September 3, 1916.*

In Galicia the Russians are advancing on Kalicz.

North of the Transylvanian Alps the Rumanians have captured Brasso. In the region of the Upper (Moldavian) Sereth they are operating side by side with the Russians and crossing the Carpathians.

On the Salonica side the army of General Sarraill is continuing to harass the Bulgarians.

On the Somme the Anglo-French offensive has been resumed with great vigour.

\* \* \*

*Monday, September 4, 1916.*

At tea time at Madame S——'s house to-day, we were

talking about *ennui*, which is the chronic disease of Russian society.

Tall and lithe, the pretty Princess D——, standing with her hands behind her back—her usual posture—was listening to us in silence. In the depths of her brown eyes there was a glow of scepticism and reverie: suddenly and quite casually she let fall the following remarks:

“It’s a funny thing. When you men are afflicted with *ennui* it knocks you flat, makes you helpless. You’re simply good for nothing and it’s an exhausting business to get you going again. But in the case of women, *ennui* rouses us, whips our senses, makes us want to commit every imaginable futility and folly. And it’s even more difficult to hold us back than to revive you.”

The observation is perfectly accurate. Generally speaking the men get bored through exhaustion or satiety, over-indulgence in pleasure, drink or high play, whereas with the women *ennui* is usually brought on by the monotony of their existence, their insatiable craving for emotional excitement, the secret yearnings of their hearts and their passions. Hence the depression of the former and the feverishness of the latter.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, September 5, 1916.*

I have been talking about America with Neratov. We both regret that so large a fraction of the American people still refuses to realize the universal significance of the conflict which is devastating Europe, and cannot see which side is in the right. It is more than a year since a German submarine sank the *Lusitania*, more than a year since the great New York paper, *The Nation*, wrote: “The torpedoing of the *Lusitania* is an act which would have made Attila blush, an act of which a Turk would be ashamed and for which a Barbary corsair would have apologized. All human and divine laws have been violated by these bandits . . .”

And still the conscience of America hesitates to declare itself!

I said to Neratov :

"Russia could do a lot to remove the last misgivings of the American public and bring them to our side once and for all."

"What could we do ? I can't imagine."

"All that is necessary is for you to make some slight improvement in your laws dealing with the Jews ; the effect in America would be considerable."

Neratov protested :

"What ! Reopen the Jewish question in the middle of a war ! It's impossible. We'd have the whole country against us. That would be an enormous injury to the Alliance ; you may be quite sure that our parties of the extreme Right would immediately accuse France and England of having secretly supported the claims of the Jews."

We returned to current topics.

The Jewish question is a heavy cloud over relations between Russia and the United States ; I have often discussed it with my American colleague, Marye, Francis's predecessor.

There are hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston.\* With their energy and intelligence, wealth and influence, they keep hatred of tsarism alive in the United States. The system of persecution which was introduced by Catherine II in 1791, and confirmed and intensified in 1882 by the famous "Ignatiev Laws," is regarded by the Americans as one of the most revolting iniquities which the history of human societies records. I can easily imagine what a free "Yankee," brought up on the superstition of the democratic ideal and the craze and reverence for individual initiative, must think of the idea of five million human beings being confined, on the sole ground of their religious beliefs, to a small area where their very numbers doom them to misery. What must he think of the facts that they

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\* The total number of Jews scattered over the globe is computed to be 12,500,000 ; 5,300,000 in Russia and 2,200,000 in the United States. Outside these two countries the largest Jewish populations are to be found in Austria-Hungary (2,250,000), Germany (615,000), Turkey (485,000), England (445,000), France (345,000), Rumania (260,000), and Holland (115,000).

cannot own or cultivate land, are deprived of all public rights, their slightest acts exposed to the arbitrary control of the police and are always living in fear of periodical massacre?

My American colleague, Marye, said to me one day:

"What shocks us most about the position of the Jews in Russia is that they are persecuted solely on the ground of their faith. The reproaches of race and economic grievances are only pretexts. This must be so because a Jew has only to abjure judaism and become converted to orthodoxy to be immediately treated like any other Russian."

In 1904 the pogroms at Kishinev aroused such indignation in the United States that President Roosevelt thought it his duty to make a solemn protest, an act which Russian society hotly resents even now: "Crimes are sometimes committed," he declared, "so monstrous that we wonder if it is not our bounden duty to express our detestation of the oppressors and our pity for the victims. Of course we cannot intervene save in very grave cases. But in extreme cases our intervention is legitimate. The American nation owes it to itself to confess its horror when it hears of massacres as terrible as those of Kishinev."

\* \* \*

*Thursday, September 7, 1916.*

Bratiano's mistake in repudiating the Rudeanu agreement, a mistake shared by his allies when they accepted that repudiation, is beginning to bear fruit.

While the Rumanian troops are advancing beyond the Carpathians and occupying Brasso, Hermannstadt and Orsova, the Austro-Bulgarians are invading the Dobrudja and approaching Silistria. A Rumanian division which was in an exposed position on the right bank of the Danube in the neighbourhood of Turtukai, has just suffered a serious reverse. Surrounded by four Germano-Bulgarian divisions, it has lost twelve thousand men and two hundred guns.

The shock of this news has filled Bucharest with consternation and the agitation is all the greater because the



city has been assiduously bombed by hostile aviators for the last three days.

\* \* \*

General Joffre, who is very naturally uneasy about the peril to Rumania, is asking that two hundred thousand Russians shall be sent to the Dobrudja at once.

In conversation with Sturmer I have vigorously seconded his request, pointing out that the whole policy of the Alliance and the very issue of the war are at stake. He replied :

"During my recent visit to Mohilev I considered with General Alexeïev whether it would not be possible to intensify our operations against Bulgaria. The General certainly does not fail to realize what an enormous advantage it would be to us to restore communication with Salonica at the earliest possible moment. But he says that he is without the necessary resources. Of course the problem is not merely how to send two hundred thousand men to the Dobrudja ; it's a question of forming those two hundred thousand men into army corps, with officers, horses, artillery and all the accessory services ; we have no such reserves so they have to be taken from the front. No doubt you know that at the present moment there is no part of our line where fighting is not in progress. General Alexeïev is continuing his operations with the greatest intensity, particularly as the bad weather is coming. So I doubt whether he will agree to suggest to His Majesty the despatch of an army south of the Danube. And don't forget the time it would take to organize and transport that army. Six weeks at least ! Wouldn't it be a grave error to neutralize two hundred thousand men in that way for so long ? "

"What about the Emperor ? Have you mentioned it to him ? "

"The Emperor quite agrees with General Alexeïev."

"The matter is serious enough to deserve further consideration. So please be good enough to refer to His Majesty again and acquaint him with my arguments."

"I'll report our conversation to His Majesty to-day."

*Saturday, September 9, 1916.*

A Russian financier, of Danish origin, who is in constant business touch with Sweden and, through that channel, always well informed about public opinion in Germany, said to me to-day :

"In the last few weeks Germany has been suffering generally from an attack of war-weariness and apprehension. No one now believes in the sudden overwhelming victory which will bring a victorious peace. Only the uncompromising Pan-Germans still affect to believe in it. The invincible resistance of the French at Verdun and the Russian advance in Galicia have produced a deep sense of disappointment which is not diminishing. People are also beginning to say that the submarine war is a stupid mistake, that it in no way prevents France and England from obtaining supplies, that the Teutonic Powers are faced with the danger of seeing the United States declare war on them before long, etc. Lastly economic discomforts are on the increase and there are frequent strikes, particularly in northern Germany, due to food restrictions. With a view to combating this wave of pessimism the Kaiser has just made Marshal von Hindenburg Chief of the General Staff in General von Falkenhayn's place. The appointment has restored the spirits of the public somewhat. All the hopes of the German people are now centred in the saviour of East Prussia, the victor of Tannenberg. The official press is lavish with dithyrambs exalting the nobility of his character, the grandeur of his ideas and the genius of his strategy ; it does not fear to call him the equal of Moltke, and to compare him to the great Frederick. It is assumed that he will want to justify this enthusiastic confidence at the earliest possible moment. As, for the time being, no victory is possible on the Russian or western fronts, it is presumed that he will seek his triumph in Rumania.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, September 12, 1916.*

Princess Paley invited me to dinner this evening with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna.

It was a very private party, and I was particularly glad to have a talk with the Grand Duchess as I had not seen her since Sazonov's dismissal.

We continued our conversation from the point at which we left off and took stock of all the changes. Our information was identical : the Empress is taking an ever growing part in politics and the Emperor is offering an ever diminishing resistance to her.

"For example," said the Grand Duchess, "the Emperor loathes Sturmer ; he knows he's incapable and dishonest ; he sees through all his advances to the Empress and is uneasy about it, as he's as jealous of his authority with the Empress as with anyone else. But he had not the courage to uphold Sazonov and he let Sturmer be thrust upon him."

"Isn't there anyone in his household who can open his eyes ? "

"No one. You know the crowd around him. Old Fredericks is still the only person who can talk really frankly to him. But he hasn't any influence. In any case, you must not think that the Emperor's eyes need opening all that much. He knows quite well what he's doing ; he fully realizes his mistakes and faults. His judgment is almost always sound. I'm sure that at the present moment he's extremely sorry he ever got rid of Sazonov."

"Then why does he go on making all these mistakes ? After all, the consequences fall directly on his own head."

"Because he's weak. He hasn't the energy to face the Empress's brow-beating, much less the scenes she makes ! And there's another reason which is far more serious : he's a fatalist. When things are going badly he tells himself it is God's will and he must bow to it ! I've seen him in this state of mind before, after the disasters in Manchuria and during the 1905 troubles."

"But is he in that frame of mind at the present moment ? "

"I'm afraid he's not far from it ; I know he's dejected, and worried to find the war going on so long without any result."

"Do you think he's capable of abandoning the struggle and making peace?"

"No, never; at any rate, not so long as there's an enemy soldier on Russian soil. He took that oath in the sight of God and he knows that if he broke it his eternal salvation would be jeopardized. And then he has a lofty conception of honour and will not betray his allies; he will be unshakable on that point. I believe I told you before that he would go to his death rather than sign a shameful or treacherous peace."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, September 13, 1916.*

General Janin has reported to me a conversation he had with the Emperor yesterday at Mohilev, a conversation which unfortunately confirms what Sturmer said to me five days ago.

The Emperor has told him that he is not in a position to send two hundred thousand men to the Dobrudja, on the ground that the armies in Galicia and Asia have suffered very heavy losses during the last few weeks and he is obliged to send them all the available reinforcements. As he ended he asked General Janin to telegraph to General Joffre and say that he urgently begs him to order General Sarraill to act with greater energy. The Emperor repeated: "It's a personal request from me to General Joffre."

\* \* \*

*Thursday, September 14, 1916.*

For some time there has been a rumour that Rasputin and Sturmer have fallen out: they are never met together, they never call on each other. And yet they see and consult each other daily. Their meetings take place in the evening in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul, the most secret place in Petrograd.

The Governor of the Romanov Bastille is General Nitikin, whose daughter is one of the most fervent adorers of the *staretz*. It is through her that messages pass between Sturmer and Grishka; she it is who goes to find

Rasputin in the town and brings him in her carriage to the fortress ; it is in the Governor's house, in fact Mlle. Nitikin's own room, that the two accomplices hold conclave.

Why do they wrap themselves up in so much mystery ? Why have they selected this secret hiding-place ? Why do they only meet at night ? May it be that they know that everyone loathes them and they wish to conceal the closeness of their association from the public ? Perhaps, too, they fear that the bomb of some anarchist may disturb their meetings.

Of all the tragic spectacles which have left memories in this fearsome state prison, are there any more sinister than the nocturnal gatherings of these two criminals who are ruining Russia ?

\* \* \*

*Friday, September 15, 1916.*

In this diary I have frequently had occasion to remark that the Russians have no precise ideas of *space* and usually content themselves with vague estimates and approximate figures. Their notion of *time* is just as vague. I was struck by this fact once more to-day at an administrative conference in Sturmer's house in which methods of assisting Rumania were under examination. In the transport programme presented to us most of the dates were uncertain, the intervals too short or too long, the timings problematical. Of course this inability to realize the temporal relations of facts is still more obvious in the case of the illiterate, who are the mass. The whole economic life of the Russian nation is kept back by it.

The phenomenon is explained easily enough if it be admitted that the accurate visualization of time is simply an order of succession introduced into our memories and plans, an organization of our mental ideas with reference to a focussing-point which is our present state. With the Russians that focussing-point is usually shifting or misty, because their perception of reality is never very distinct, they do not clearly define their sensations and notions, their power of attention is low and their reasoning

and calculations are almost always blended with the imaginary.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, September 16, 1916.*

Under the increasing pressure of the Bulgarians the Rumanians are progressively evacuating the Dobrudja, and every day and night Austrian airmen bomb Bucharest from their base at Rustchuk.

From the moment the Rudeanu agreement was thrown over these misfortunes were easy to foresee. The Rumanian Government is paying dearly for the mistake it made in directing its whole military effort towards Transylvania, allowing itself to be taken in by vague rumours from Sofia and particularly in imagining that the Bulgarians had abandoned the idea of a military revenge for the disaster and humiliation of 1913.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, September 17, 1916.*

*Sylvia* and *The Water-Lily* were given at the Marie Theatre this evening. In both works the lead is in the hands of Karsavina.

The sumptuous hall, with its blue and gold hangings, was quite full; the evening marked the opening of the winter season and the resumption of those ballets in which the Russian imagination loves to follow the interplay of flying forms and rhythmic movements through the music. From the stalls to the back row of the highest circle I could see nothing but a sea of cheery, smiling faces. In the intervals the boxes came to life with the irresponsible chatter which made the bright eyes of the women sparkle with merriment. Irsome thoughts of the present, sinister visions of war and the melancholy prospects of the future vanished as if by magic the moment the orchestra struck up. An air of pleasant unreality was in every face.

Thomas de Quincy, the author of the *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, tells us that the drug often gave him the

illusions of music. Conversely, the Russians go to music for the effects of opium.

\* \* \*

*Monday, September 18, 1916.*

The Salonica army has resumed the offensive on the whole of the Macedonian front. The Bulgarians have been driven back in the neighbourhood of Florina and are now withdrawing towards Monastir.





## CHAPTER II

SEPTEMBER 19—OCTOBER 25, 1916



## CHAPTER II

SEPTEMBER 19—OCTOBER 25, 1916

The heralds of winter.—The Church of the Saviour-on-the-Waters.—The Emperor is often charged with being heartless.—The combined effort of the Allies to relieve Rumania.—Public education in Russia: the primary schools.—Ignorance of the rural masses; a contrast with the brilliant development of science, letters and art.—A political crisis in Athens; Venizelos goes to Crete.—Prince Kanin's visits to Petrograd: the reflections of a *moujik*.—Another Minister of the Interior: Protopopov; his relations with Rasputin.—Sturmer's treachery; the intrigues of which he is the centre.—Clandestine activities of the socialist leaders.—Successive defeats of the Rumanian army; a very grave situation.—General Berthelot passes through Petrograd on his way to take command of the French mission in Rumania.—My Japanese colleague, Viscount Motono, is appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs; a great authority on Asiatic and European problems.—The Minister of Communications, Trepov, boldly attacks Sturmer; his confidence in the Emperor.—German agents in Petrograd: dinners at the house of Manus, the financier.—Costanza captured by the Austro-Bulgarians; the Rumanians evacuate the Dobrudja.

*Tuesday, September 19, 1916.*

Winter is already at hand. Under the livid sky a slow-falling, invisible and icy rain seems to fill the air with a snowy vapour. The light is going by four o'clock. I was finishing my drive about that hour and happened to pass the little church of the Saviour-on-the-Waters which is on the bank of the Neva, near the Arsenal. I stopped my carriage and got out to visit this poetic sanctuary which I have not entered since the war.

It is one of the very few churches in Petrograd in which the conventional and showy style of Italo-Germanic architecture has not had its fling; it is perhaps the only one in which the worshipper breathes an atmosphere of quiet meditation and an odour of mysticism. It was built in 1910 in memory of the twelve thousand sailors who died in the war against Japan, and is an exquisite copy of Muscovite art in the twelfth century, the church of Bogoliubovo, near Vladimir.

Externally it has simple, well-defined lines, with Roman arches and a graceful dome. In the warm half-darkness inside, the sole decoration of the bare walls consists of bronze plaques on which are engraved the names of all the vessels, officers and men lost at Port Arthur, Vladivostock and Tsushima. I know nothing more moving in its very simplicity than this memorial church. But one's feelings are transformed and touch on the sublime at the sight of the iconostasis. In the depths of the dark apse a figure of Christ, more than life size, hovers and glows in a golden cloud above black waves. In the majesty of the attitude, the nobility of the gestures and the infinite pity which speaks in the eyes, this figure reminds one of the finest Byzantine mosaics.

When I first visited this church, at the beginning of 1914, I did not realize all the pathetic symbolism of this sacred figure. To-day its grandeur and eloquence seemed prodigious, as if it were an interpretation of that last vision which has soothed and sanctified the dying moments of thousands upon thousands during this war.

By a natural connection of ideas I remembered what Rasputin said to the Empress one day when she was weeping on hearing of the enormous losses in a great battle: "Take heart! When a *moujik* dies for his Tsar and country, another lamp is immediately lit before the throne of God."

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*Wednesday, September 20, 1916.*

Hindenburg's plan is taking shape and in course of realization on the whole of the circular Rumanian front. Along the Danube and in the Dobrudja the region of Orsova and the defiles of the Carpathians, the German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Turkish forces are exercising sustained and converging pressure, under which the Rumanians are giving way at all points.

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*Thursday, September 21, 1916.*

I often hear the Emperor accused of heartlessness and

selfishness. He is charged with having always shown himself indifferent not only to the misfortunes of his relatives, friends and most faithful servants, but even to the sorrows of his people. Several memorable incidents are quoted in which he certainly displayed astonishing indifference.

The first occasion was during the celebrations attending his coronation at Moscow on May 18, 1896. A public fête had been arranged in Khodinsky meadow, near Petrovsky park. But the police arrangements were so bad that the crowd began to heave violently. Suddenly there seemed to be a panic and a general stampede ensued ; there were four thousand victims, of which two thousand died. When Nicholas II heard of the catastrophe he did not display the slightest sign of emotion and did not even cancel a ball for that evening.

Nine years later, on May 14, 1905, Admiral Rojdestvensky's fleet was utterly destroyed ; with it disappeared Russia's whole future in the Far East. The Emperor was just about to play a game of tennis when the telegram announcing the disaster was handed to him. He simply said : "What a horrible catastrophe !" and without another word, asked for his racket.

It was with the same unruffled composure that he received the news of the assassination of the Minister of the Interior, Plehve, in 1904, of his uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei, in 1905, and of Stolypin, his President of the Council, in 1911.

And, quite recently, the hasty, underhand way in which he dismissed his close associate, Prince Orlov, has again revealed a stratum of callousness in him, a soul all but impervious to the generous impulses of gratitude and friendship.

• After referring to all these incidents, old Princess D——, who has known the Emperor since his childhood, concluded with the bitter remark :

"Nicholas Alexandrovitch has no heart at all."

I protested that for all that, he appears to be capable of affection towards his own family ; he is certainly extremely devoted to the Empress ; he adores his daughters

and idolizes his son. He cannot be denied instincts of tenderness. I am inclined to think that the superhuman situation in which he is placed has gradually changed his feelings towards other men and that his indifference is also one result of his fatalism

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*Friday, September 22, 1916.*

Are Sturmer's political fortunes in danger? I am told that, judging by credible indications, his bitter enemy, the Minister of the Interior, Khvostov, has turned the Emperor completely against him by telling His Majesty the inner history of the Manuilov affair and making him extremely alarmed at the prospect of an imminent scandal. What is this inner history? We do not know; but it cannot be doubted that there are one or more corpses between Sturmer and the director of his secretariat.

It is even being said that the question of Sturmer's successor as President of the Council has already been settled in secret. The choice is said to have fallen on the present Minister of Communications, Alexander Feodorovitch Trepov. I could only congratulate myself on such an appointment. Trepov is as honest, intelligent and hard-working as energetic and patriotic.

I dined this evening at the Donon restaurant with Kokovtsov and Putilov. The ex-President of the Council and the millionaire banker outbid each other with lugubrious forebodings.

Kokovtsov said :

"We're heading for revolution."

Putilov added :

"We're heading for anarchy."

To explain himself, he continued :

"The Russian is not a revolutionary; he's an anarchist. There's a world of difference. The revolutionary means to reconstruct; the anarchist thinks only of destroying."

*Saturday, September 23, 1916.*

The Allies are attacking on all the fronts with a view to taking the weight off Rumania.

In Artois and Picardy the English and French have carried an extensive series of German trenches by storm. In the Isonzo region the Italians are intensifying their offensive east of Gorizia. In Macedonia the English are crossing the Struma whilst the French and Serbians, after occupying Florina, are hustling the Bulgarians in the direction of Monastir. In Volhynia the Russians are harassing the Austro-Germans from the Pinsk marshes to Lutzk. In Galicia they are advancing on Lemberg and south-west of Kalicz. In the Bukovina Carpathians they have captured several hostile positions north of Dorma Vatra.

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*Sunday, September 24, 1916.*

A popular misconception, both in France and England (and I am always hearing the echo of it) is that tsarism would easily settle its domestic difficulties if it abandoned its antiquated principles and boldly entered the path of democratic reforms. It is said that all the latent energies and unsuspected virtues of the Russian people would be revealed at once. There would be a prodigious outpouring of patriotism, intelligence, moral fervour, force of character, spirit of initiative and organization, practical idealism, lofty conceptions of social, national and human duty. The western Allies should therefore put pressure on the Emperor Nicholas to make him adopt the necessary innovations. The change would also mean doubling the effective power of the Alliance.

The recent visit of the "Cadet" deputies to London and Paris has contributed not a little to the spread of these ideas. These gentlemen have even made a complaint about myself—the complaint that I am not seen enough in liberal circles, that I do not display my sympathy with them as openly as I might and do not take advantage of my friendly relations with the Emperor to convert him to parliamentary principles.

In this diary I have on several occasions explained the attitude of reserve I have felt bound to adopt towards the liberal parties. Whatever the defects of tsarism may be, it is the tie-beam of Russia, the basis and framework of Russian society, the sole link between the heterogeneous territories and peoples which ten centuries of history have gradually gathered under the sceptre of the Romanovs. So long as the war lasts the Allies must therefore uphold it at any cost. I have frequently developed this argument.

But I go further : I am convinced that for a long time to come, one or two generations perhaps, the internal evils from which Russia is suffering will only admit of treatment which is palliative, partial and cautiously graduated. The outstanding reason is the colossal ignorance in which the mass of the Russian nation is vegetating.

It is there that the real weakness of Russia lies, and the principal source of her incapacity for political progress can be found. In this vast empire there are not more than one hundred and twenty thousand primary schools for a population of one hundred and eighty million souls. And *such* schools, *such* teachers ! As a general rule the teaching is entrusted to the parish priest who is usually a poor creature, idle and despised. In his syllabus reading, writing and arithmetic take second place to prayers, the catechism, sacred history and church music. Thus the education of the nation is more or less directly in the hands of the clergy. The Holy Synod recently reminded its priests that the schools must be kept "in the closest association with the church, and in strict observance of the orthodox faith," and that the religious education of the children must be "the first concern of the masters."

The system functions in the most defective manner. In many districts the schools are poorly attended or actually empty, either because of the distances, snow and cold, or because educational material and books are lacking, or the *moujiks* have quarrelled with the priest and thrashed him too hard.

To the great Catherine, the empress-philosopher and friend of Voltaire and Diderot, is due the credit, as of so



much else, of founding public education in Russia. Some twenty secondary schools and a hundred primary schools were established in her reign. She threw herself into this enterprise with her usual enthusiasm, though without forgetting those principles of government which still inspire her successors. One day, when the governor of Moscow was complaining of the indifference his citizens displayed towards the new institution, the tsarina replied : "Are you complaining because the Russians don't try to educate themselves ? I didn't start these schools for *their* sake, but for the sake of Europe, where we must keep our place in public opinion. If a day comes when our peasants want to be educated, neither you nor I will remain where we are."

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*Monday, September 25, 1916.*

Thinking over what I wrote yesterday about the general ignorance of the Russian nation, it is a pleasure by contrast to draw up a list of all the eminent men who are the glory of Russia to-day in the domain of science, thought, literature and art ; for if the masses are uneducated and backward, the élite are brilliant, active, highly productive and vigorous. I know few countries which can produce so fine a contingent of great minds, unprejudiced, luminous and discerning intellects, original, fascinating and irrepressible talent.

There is fierce rivalry in all the departments of scientific work. Nowhere is experimental and practical science more worthily represented, as it is carried on by biologists such as Pavlov and Metchnikov, chemists such as Mendeleïev, physicists like Lebedev, geologists like Karpinsky and mathematicians like Liapunov, Vassiliev and Krylov ; I will even venture the opinion that Pavlov and Mendeleïev are as great as Claude Bernard and Lavoisier.

The historians, archæologists and ethnographers also form a solid phalanx of erudite and sagacious investigators. I need only name Kliutchevsky, Miliukov, Platonov and Rostovtsev in the historical field ; in the archæological, Vesselovsky and Kondakov ; in the ethnographical, Mogui-

lansky. Several groups of linguists have been doing excellent work for many years, displaying the same strict method and the same subtle power of analysis and intuition. Professors Chakmohtov and Zelinsky are up to the level of the best foreign masters.

Philosophy has never been highly developed in the empire of the Tsars, any more than it could develop in the Papal states in the days of temporal power: when theological dogmatism has a society in its grip philosophers necessarily feel themselves hampered. On the other hand, metaphysical speculation is seriously cultivated in intellectual circles in Petrograd and Moscow; its leading experts are Lopatin, Berdiaev and Prince Sergei Trubetzkoi, the disciple and successor of the great idealist, Vladimir Soloviev.

Imaginative literature, though still mourning the loss of Tolstoi and Dostoievsky, displays a vitality in every branch which justifies the greatest hopes. From the generous output of these last ten years one could extract some thirty works, novels or plays, which are remarkable for their chaste beauty of form, careful composition, regard for moral and pictorial truth, psychological divination, the lifelike quality of the characters, the corroding flavour of pessimism, the vivid portrayal of life, turbid or sordid, insatiable or passive, the moving obsession of mental derangement, and last but not least the clear and tragic vision of social problems. Several writers who have thus made their mark since 1905 have already disappeared; but to judge the evolution of the literary movement in Russia, an assembly of talents so varied as those of Gorky, Anreiev, Korolenko, Veressaiev, Merejovsky, Madame Hippus, Artzibachev, Kuprin, Kamen-sky, Sologub, Kuzmin, Ivanov, Bunin, Tchirykov, Gumilov and Brussov certainly constitutes one of the most favourable symptoms.

There is the same vitality in painting, in which realistic and national tendencies are sometimes so happily brought out under the brush of Repin, Golovin, Roerich, Somov, Maliavin, and Vrubel, not to mention the powerful portrait-painter Serov, who died four years ago. And could I

omit the names of the two men responsible for the revolution in theatrical decoration, those marvellous magicians of scenic illusion, Alexander Benois and Bakst?

In music the glorious era of Balakirev, Moussorgsky, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov is over. But their artistic offspring, Glazunov, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Rachmaninov and young Prokofiev, are manfully continuing the great tradition and as anxious to prolong it as to enrich and extend it. With the wealth and freedom of its inspiration, the dreamy and enticing grace of the melodic design, its fertility of invention, the brilliance of orchestral colour and the bold pursuit of polyphonic complexities, Russian music seems to be on the very threshold of a second blooming.

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*Tuesday, September 26, 1916.*

The situation in Athens is getting worse: the duel between the King and Venizelos has reached the critical phase.

A Russian journalist, who to my knowledge has some kind of relations with Sturmer, has just been to see me to tell me privately that "certain people at court" are not at all sorry to contemplate the possibility of a dynastic crisis in Greece, and are even cherishing hopes that the French will precipitate that crisis, "which would be so advantageous to the cause of the Allies."

I cautiously replied that the views which inspire Briand's policy towards Greece in no way involve a dynastic crisis and that it is for King Constantine himself to carry out the splendid programme of national expansion which the Allies have put before him.

He dropped the subject.

It is quite easy to see through the designs of Sturmer and the "people at court." Obviously the disciples of Russian autocracy could not be a party to overturning a throne. But if events in Greece are bound to lead to the proclamation of a republic, would it not be better, they say, to put a swift stop to the crisis by a change of monarch? There is no lack of candidates in the Russian

imperial family. And as an autocratic government could not decently undertake so dirty a job as the dethronement of a King, does not everything show that the government of the French Republic is designated for this operation ?

Prince Kotohito Kanin, cousin of the Mikado, is arriving in Petrograd to-morrow ; he has come to return the visit which the Grand Duke George Michailovitch recently paid to the Emperor Yoshihito.

On orders from the police, bunches of Russian and Japanese flags are being displayed in the streets.

These preparations are prompting the *moujiks* to curious reflections. My naval attaché, Commander Gallaud, has been telling me that when he was driving in the Champ-de-Mars to-day, his *isvostchik* turned round, pointed to some recruits who were drilling and asked him in a sly tone :

“ What are they being drilled for ? ”

“ To fight the Germans.”

“ What’s the good ? Look at me. I was in the Manchurian campaign myself in 1905 ; I was wounded at Mukden. And now ! Look at them hanging out flags from all the houses and raising triumphal arches on the Nevsky Prospekt in honour of this Japanese prince who is coming ! In a few years it’ll be the same with the Germans. We shall be welcoming *them* under triumphal arches. Then why have thousands and thousands of men killed if all this is bound to end like the Japanese business ? ”

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Wednesday, September 27, 1916.

Sturmer has just spent three days with the Emperor at Mohilev.

I am told that he put his case with great skill. He has come out of the Manuilov affair as well as he could hope, pleading that if he erred it was only through innocence and too much kindness of heart. He emphasized the point that the Duma is shortly to meet, there is a ferment of revolutionary feeling and that it is more vital than ever not to weaken the government. But all his eloquence

would have been wasted if the Empress had not supported him with all her stubborn energy. He has been saved.

I saw him in his room to-day; he looked pleased and confident. I asked him about military matters first.

"Does General Alexeiev fully realize the great, the vital importance to the common cause, of the safety of Rumania?"

"I have been able to satisfy myself that General Alexeiev attaches very high importance to the operations in the Dobrudja. Four Russian divisions and one Serbian division have already crossed the Danube; another Serbian division will be sent there shortly. But that is the most that His Majesty has authorized him to do in that quarter. You know that we have to cope with enormous forces in the region of Kovel and Stanislau."

He confirmed a fact which my officers had already mentioned to me—that the Russian armies in Galicia have recently suffered excessive losses without any appreciable result. Between Pinsk and the Carpathians they are fighting twenty-nine German divisions, forty Austro-Hungarian and two Turkish; their task is made extremely difficult by their inadequate supply of heavy artillery and aeroplanes.

Then we discussed the ministerial crisis which is at hand in Athens and the nationalist movement of which Venizelos is the centre.

"I've not yet had time," said Sturmer, "to read all the telegrams that have arrived to-night but I can tell you *now* that the Emperor has used very stern language about King Constantine."

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*Thursday, September 28, 1916.*

„ Bombshell in Greece. Venizelos and Admiral Condouriotis have secretly sailed for Crete where the insurgents have declared in favour of the Entente; nationalist demonstrators are parading the streets of Athens and thousands of officers and men are gathering at the Piræus, demanding to be sent to Salonica so that they can take service in General Sarraïl's army.

I have been considering the possible consequences of these occurrences with Sturmer.

"It's in our own hands whether the situation turns to our advantage," I said, "provided we act promptly and vigorously."

"Yes, yes. Certainly."

Then he hesitatingly remarked, as if picking his words :

"What are we to do if King Constantine persists in his resistance ?"

He gave me a curious look, fixing a questioning and shifty eye upon me. I pretended to be thinking. He repeated his question.

"What are we to do with King Constantine ?"

If his question was not an insinuation it was certainly a bait, and was obviously connected with the pseudo-secret of the Russian journalist.

I replied in evasive terms that I was not yet sufficiently acquainted with the course of events in Athens to venture to offer any practical advice, and added :

"In any case I'd rather wait until Monsieur Briand lets me know his views ; but I won't fail to tell him that in your opinion the position of King Constantine is directly involved in the present crisis."

We then turned to other topics : Prince Kanin's visit and the unfortunate development of the military operations in the Dobrudja and the Transylvanian Alps, etc.

As I was leaving I noticed on the walls of the room three engravings which were not there yesterday. The first was of the Congress of Vienna, the second of the Congress of Paris and the third of the Congress of Berlin.

"I see you like to have inspiring pictures around you, President."

"Yes, you know how passionately fond of history I am. I know nothing more instructive."

"And more deceptive."

"Come, don't be sceptical ! Nobody believes enough ! But you haven't noticed the most interesting thing."

"What's that ?"

"That vacant place !"

"Well ?"

"That's the place I'm keeping for the picture of the next congress ; it's to be called the Congress of Moscow, if God wills !".

He crossed himself and closed his eyes a moment, as if breathing a short prayer.

I answered quietly : " But will there be any congress ? Haven't we agreed to make Germany accept our terms ? "

With an ecstatic expression he developed his idea and repeated :

" How splendid it would be at Moscow ! How splendid ! May God grant it ! May God grant it ! "

He was already imagining himself Chancellor of the Empire, the successor of Nesselrode and Gortchakov, opening the general peace congress in the Kremlin. All the pettiness, stupidity and infatuation of the man were laid bare at that moment. All he can see in his heavy task, one of the heaviest ever laid on human shoulders, is an opportunity for bragging—and personal advancement.

This evening I returned, in full uniform, to the Foreign Office, where the President of the Council has given an official banquet to Prince Kanin.

Too much glare, silver and plate, food and music ; too many flowers and servants ! It was all dazzle and noise. I could not help thinking what a better tone there was in Sazonov's time, when official show was still in good taste.

At the head of the table sat the Grand Duke George Michailovitch ; I was on Sturmer's left.

During the whole of dinner we simply talked common-places. But at dessert Sturmer said to me *ex abrupto*.

" The Congress of Moscow ! Don't you think it would be a magnificent consecration of the Franco-Russian alliance ? A century after the burning of our sacred city it would see Russia and France proclaiming the peace of the world ! "

He complacently expatiated on this theme.

I continued : " I have no idea of the views of my government as to the seat of the next congress and I

should be surprised if, in the present stage of our military operations, Monsieur Briand had even turned his thoughts to so distant an eventuality. In any case, as I told you this morning, I hope there will be no congress. In my opinion it is of great importance for the Allies to agree upon all the general terms of the peace, so that we can make our enemies accept them *en bloc*. Part of the work has already been done; we are agreed about Constantinople, the Straits, Asia Minor, Transylvania, the Adriatic littoral, etc. The rest will be settled when a favourable opportunity presents itself. But first and foremost we must concentrate on victory. Our motto must be: *Primum et ante omnia, vincere!* Your health, my dear President!"

During the evening I had a talk with Prince Kanin. He told me of his long residence in France, at the school at Saumur, and then said how much he had been touched by the Emperor's cordial welcome, and what a pleasant impression his reception by the crowd had made upon him. We talked about the war and I noticed how he avoided all detailed discussion and expressed no opinion on situations and facts. Under his cold compliments I could guess his contempt for the vanquished of 1905 who have learned their lesson so badly.

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Friday, September 29, 1916.

The economic situation has become much worse in the last few weeks. The increased cost of living is causing hardship all round. The price of the most elementary necessities is three times what it was at the beginning of the war; in the case of wood and eggs it is four times, and in that of butter and soap five times. The main causes of this situation are unfortunately as fundamental, as obvious—the closing of foreign markets, congestion on the railways and confusion and dishonesty in the public services.

What will it be in a few weeks' time when we have to cope with the rigours of winter and the tortures of the cold, which are even more cruel than those of hunger?



*Saturday, September 30, 1916.*

A stubborn struggle is in progress in Galicia, between the Styr and the Zlota Lipa. The Russians, who have taken the offensive, are trying to force their way through in the region of Krasnie and Brzezany, fifty kilometres from Lemberg.

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*Sunday, October 1, 1916.*

There has been a reception at the Japanese embassy in honour of Prince Kanin. It has been a particularly brilliant function, the guests including the Grand Duke George, the Grand Duke Sergei, the Grand Duke Cyril, etc.

I congratulated my colleague, Motono, on his success. In his shrewd, phlegmatic way he replied :

"Yes, it's gone off quite well. When I first came as ambassador to Petrograd in 1908, hardly anyone spoke to me ; no one ever asked me out and the Grand Dukes affected not to see me. All that has changed. I have achieved the object I set before me : Japan and Russia are linked by the ties of real friendship."

In the throng around the buffet I spied E——, a high official at court, who has taken a liking to me and never misses an opportunity of pouring his suspicious and extravagant nationalism into my ear. I asked him his news.

Without appearing to have heard my question, he pointed to Sturmer who was holding forth a few feet away from us. Then, with a tragic glare, E—— burst out :

"Why haven't you and your English colleague put a stop to that man's treachery before now, Ambassador ?"

I calmed him down :

"It's a subject I'd like to discuss with you . . . but not here. Come and lunch with me alone on Thursday."

"I'll certainly be there."

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*Monday, October 2, 1916.*

The battle which has begun between the Styr and the

Zlota Lipa is taking a favourable turn for the Russians, who have pierced the enemy's forward lines and made five thousand prisoners.

But there are indications of a formidable counter-attack by the Germans in the region of Lutzk, a hundred kilometres north.

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*Tuesday, October 3, 1916.*

Sturmer has succeeded in ruining his mortal enemy, Alexander Khvostov, the Minister of the Interior. Henceforth the Manuilov affair has no terrors for him.

The new Minister of the Interior is one of the vice-presidents of the Duma, Protopopov. Hitherto the Emperor has very seldom chosen his members from the representative chamber. But the selection of Protopopov does not herald any evolution in the direction of parliamentary government. Quite the contrary.

On the strength of his earlier opinions, Protopopov ranked as an "Octobrist," i.e. a very moderate liberal. Last June he was a member of the parliamentary delegation which visited the West; both in London and Paris he showed himself to be a fervent advocate of the war *à outrance*. But during a short stay in Stockholm on his way back he had a strange conversation with a German agent, Warburg, and though the affair remains somewhat obscure, there is no doubt that he spoke in favour of peace.

When he returned to Petrograd he made common cause with Sturmer and Rasputin, who immediately put him in touch with the Empress. He was soon taken into favour and at once initiated into the secret conclaves at Tsarskoïe-Selo. He was entitled to a place there on the strength of his proficiency in the occult sciences, principally spiritualism, the highest and most doubtful of them all. I also know for certain that he once had an infectious disease which has left him with nervous disorders, and that recently the preliminary symptoms of general paralysis have been observed in him. So the internal policy of the empire is in good hands!

*Wednesday, October 4, 1916.*

It is the Grand Duke Paul's birthday to-day, and he invited me to dinner with the Grand Duke Cyril and his wife the Grand Duchess Victoria, the Grand Duke Boris, the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, Madame Narishkin, Countess Kreutz, Dimitry Benckendorff, Savinsky and others.

Everyone looked very downcast, and indeed one would have to be blind not to see the portents of disaster which are gathering on the horizon.

The Grand Duchess spoke to me in a voice of anguish about her sister, the Queen of Rumania. I dared not reassure her, for if the Rumanians are still holding their ground in the Carpathians it is only with the greatest difficulty, and if they relax their efforts in the slightest there will be a complete disaster.

"For Heaven's sake, *insist* that reinforcements shall be sent there at once," she said. "From what my poor sister says—and you know how brave she is—there's not a moment to lose. If help is not sent to Rumania without delay, a catastrophe is inevitable."

I told her of my daily protests to Sturmer.

"Theoretically, he agrees to all I say and consents to everything I ask. But in practice he shelters behind General Alexeïev, who does not seem to realize the dangers of the situation. And the Emperor only looks at things through General Alexeïev's eyes."

"The Emperor is in a deplorable frame of mind!"

Without further explanation, she suddenly rose and, on the excuse of getting a cigarette, rejoined the group of ladies.

I then tackled the Grand Duke Paul, the Grand Duke Boris and the Grand Duke Cyril—one by one. They have seen the Tsar recently; they move in his circle so that they are well qualified to give me news. But I was very careful not to make my questions too direct, as I knew they would evade them. I introduced the monarch's opinions incidentally and as if not attaching any importance to them; I referred casually to certain of his decisions or

some remark he has made to me. They answered quite candidly.

Their replies, which they could not have concocted together, have left me in no doubt as to the Emperor's moral condition. There has been no change in what he says; he still proclaims his determination to win and his absolute confidence in victory. But despondency, apathy and resignation can be seen in his actions, appearance, attitude and all the manifestations of the inner man.

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*Thursday, October 5, 1916.*

E——, the high court functionary, came to lunch at the embassy. To make him quite at home I had not invited any other guests.

As long as we were at table he kept a check on himself because of the servants. When we returned to the drawing-room he tossed down two glasses of brandy, filled a third, lit a cigar and with a flaming countenance looked me full in the face and asked me bluntly.

"Ambassador, why are you and your English colleague waiting to put an end to Monsieur Sturmer's treacheries?"

"We're waiting until we have some definite grievance against him. Officially we have nothing to complain about; all his words and actions are all that they ought to be. He's always telling us: 'War to the knife! No mercy for Germany!' As regards his real views and secret manœuvres, we have only impressions and intuitions which carry us no further than conjectures and suspicions. You would be doing us a very great service if you could produce one actual fact to support your beliefs."

"I don't know of any actual fact. But the treachery is obvious enough. Don't you see it?"

"It's not enough to see it; I must be in a position to make my Government see it, and then the Emperor. One can't embark on a serious matter like this without even a vestige of evidence."

"You're right."

"As we're reduced to hypotheses for the time being,



would you mind telling me what form you think Sturmer's treachery takes ? ”

He then told me that, in themselves, Sturmer, Rasputin, Dobrovolsky, Protopopov and Co. are only of minor and secondary importance, as they are simply tools in the hands of an anonymous and small, but very powerful clique which is bent on peace, either because it is tired of the war or because it fears revolution.

“At the head of this clique,” he continued, “you find—as you would expect to find—the nobility of the Baltic provinces and all the principal officials at court. Then there is the ultra-reactionary party in the Council of Empire and the Duma, our Lords of the Holy Synod, and all the high financiers and big industrials. They've got the Empress through Sturmer and Rasputin, and the Emperor through the Empress.”

“No! They haven't got the Emperor yet! They'll never get him! I mean they'll never induce him to separate from his allies.”

“Then they'll have him assassinated or force him to abdicate.”

“Abdicate? Can you see the Emperor abdicating? In whose favour?”

“In favour of his son, with the Empress as Regent. You may be certain that *that* is what Sturmer, or rather those controlling him, are planning. That gang will stop at nothing to gain their ends; they're capable of anything. They'll foment strikes, riots, *pogroms*; they'll try to produce social distress and famine and make everyone so thoroughly wretched and despondent that the continuation of the war will become impossible. You should have seen them at work in 1905?”

I turned over in my mind all he had just said and concluded:

“I see. The first thing to do is to demolish Sturmer. I'll set about it.”

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*Saturday, October 7, 1916.*

Between the Styr and the Zlota Lipa the Russians

have been held up by the network of impregnable fortifications constructed to defend Lemberg. They have also been compelled to shift their centre of gravity to the region of Lutzk, a hundred kilometres to the north, where the Germans are making a strong attack.

Since their vast offensive began, the armies of General Brussilov have captured four hundred and thirty thousand men, six hundred and fifty guns and two thousand seven hundred machine-guns.

Madame G——, whose husband holds an important post in the Ministry of the Interior, has been Sturmer's Egeria for many years. Ambitious and addicted to intrigue, she has helped Boris Vladimirovitch all through his administrative career. Since the day when, thanks to Rasputin, she got him made President of the Council, there is no limit to her visions of greatness for him. She recently remarked to one of her friends, putting a mysterious gravity into her words as if she were telling some state secret: "You'll be seeing great things before long. In a short time our dear country will be in the true path of safety. *Boris Vladimirovitch will be the First Minister of Her Majesty the Empress!*"

\* \* \*

Sunday, October 8, 1916.

Someone who keeps me well informed as to what is being said and done in advanced circles has been telling me of great activity in the social-democratic party, and particularly its extreme wing, the *Bolsheviki*.

The long drawn-out war, doubts about victory and the difficulties of the economic situation have given revolutionary hopes new life. Preparations are being made for the struggle which is believed to be at hand.

The leaders of the movement are the three "labour" deputies in the Duma, Tcheidze, Skobelev and Kerensky. Great influence is also being exercised from abroad, the influence of Lenin who has fled to Switzerland.

What strikes me most about the Petrograd triumvirate

is the practical character of its activity. The disappointments of 1905 have borne fruit. There is no idea now of joining hands with the "Cadets," who are *bourgeois* and will never understand the proletariat: all illusions as to the immediate help to be expected from the rural masses have now vanished, and the revolutionaries are merely promising them the division of land. But the main thing is that the "armed revolution" is being organized. It is by the closest association between the workmen and the soldiers that the "revolutionary dictatorship" will be established: victory will be secured by the co-operation of the factory and the barracks. Kerensky is the soul of this movement.

\* \* \*

*Monday, October 9, 1916.*

The new Minister of the Interior, Protopopov, is showing that his opinions and programme are ultra-reactionary. He has no fear, it is said, of facing the forces of revolution; if need be, he will provoke them and annihilate them at a blow. He feels himself the man to save tsarism and orthodox Holy Russia: he will save them. Such is the way he talks to his personal friends with inexhaustible loquacity and a self-satisfied smile. And yet it is only a few months since he was reckoned among the moderate liberals in the Duma. His friends of those days, who thought enough of him to make him vice-president of the assembly, cannot recognize him now.

His swift conversion is explained, so I am told, by his state of health. The sudden revulsions of feeling and the excitement of his imaginative faculties are the preliminary symptoms of general paralysis. A fact which is undoubted and has recently come to my knowledge is that he was brought into touch with Rasputin by his doctor, the therapist Badmaiev, the Mongolian quack who treats his patients with the magical remedies and mystical pharmacopœia of the sorcerers of Tibet. I have referred previously to the alliance between the spiritualist charlatan and the *staretz* which was formed at the bedside of the little Tsarevitch.



As Protopopov had long been initiated into the doctrines of occultism he was predestined to become a client of Badmaiev. The latter is always engaged in some intrigue or other and he immediately realized that the vice-president of the Duma would be a very valuable recruit to the Empress's *camarilla*. In the course of his cabalistic operations he had no difficulty in dominating the disordered mind and shattered brain in which the early signs of megalomania were already perceptible. Before long he introduced him to Rasputin. The neurotic politician and the magician-mystic were delighted with each other. A few days later Grigori described Protopopov to the Empress as the God-sent saviour of Russia. Sturmer seconded with his customary servility and the Emperor once again gave way.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, October 10, 1916.*

The Rumanians are in retreat along the whole line. The High Command is incapable and the troops are tired and dispirited: the news is horrible.

Very fortunately, General Berthelot, who is going to take command of the French mission in Rumania, has just arrived in Petrograd. I have been very favourably impressed by him. His shrewd and roguish glance contrast with his stout and massive figure. He has a lucid and thoughtful mind and his speech is simple and to the point. But his outstanding quality is strength of will, a determination which is quiet and pleasant, but quite inflexible.

I introduced him to Sturmer and we set to work at once. Neratov and Buchanan were present at the conference. I took up the theme I have so often argued of the vital importance to Russia of the operations in the Danube region.

"In spite of the brilliant successes of General Brussilov, your offensive has not justified all our hopes. Failing some fortunate happening—which becomes less probable every day—there is likely to be a deadlock on the whole front from Riga to the Carpathians, owing to the lack of

heavy artillery and aeroplanes. In these circumstances, if we let Rumania be crushed and Bucharest and Constanza fall into the enemy's hands, it is Russia which will mainly have to face the consequences, as Odessa will be threatened and the road to Constantinople will be blocked. In face of such a prospect, could not General Alexeïev spare out of all his armies the equivalent of three or four army corps to send to the help of Rumania? The offensive of the Salonica army has started well, but all its efforts will be in vain if the Rumanian army is put out of action."

General Berthelot supported this argument with facts and figures. Sir George Buchanan agreed. Sturmer acquiesced, as usual, but would not commit General Alexeïev, also as usual.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, October 11, 1916.*

My Japanese colleague, Viscount Motono, has just been appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs. Of all the Japanese I have known he is certainly the most open-minded, the best informed on European politics and the most accessible to European thought and culture. With his departure I shall lose an excellent colleague, a man who is perfectly safe to deal with and one with a remarkable all-round knowledge.

After congratulating him I asked him about the direction he proposes to give the diplomacy of Japan.

"I shall try," he replied, "to apply the ideas I have so often expounded to you. In the first place I should like to make our help in the war more effective. That will be the most difficult part of my task, as public opinion with us does not realize the universal character of the problems which are now being solved on the European battlefields."

This pronouncement in no way surprised me as he has always been advocating a more active intervention in the European struggle; he has even tried to persuade his government to send Japanese army corps to France and has pleaded unceasingly for the output of Japanese arms and munitions for Russia to be increased, and the rate of

supply accelerated. At every stage he has adopted the most lofty views of the alliance.

Then I asked him his intentions with regard to China. He continued :

"What can I add to what I have already told you so often ? You know what I shall try to do—and also what I shall refuse to do."

I will summarize the opinions and prophecies he has often uttered in my presence on the subject of China :

(1) When the present struggle is over, the Chinese question will gradually take that place in the general policy of the Powers which was formerly taken by the Eastern question ; (2) At the present moment there is not *one* Chinese question ; there are several. The problem has not yet been stated in its full import. The succession of the Chinese Empire is not open. For a very considerable time, twenty years and perhaps more, the Powers will only be able to keep China under observation ; they will have to confine themselves to applying provisional remedies to her, giving her symptomatic treatment, as the doctors say ; (3) The European Powers should realize that geographical propinquity, ethnical affinities and historical memories give Japan not prerogatives, but special interests in China. On her side Japan must realize that the successful solution of the Chinese problems can only be reached in Europe. If Japanese diplomacy succeeds in taking a lofty view of its task, Japan should become the instrument of conciliation between all the rivalries and antagonisms of which China is the theatre. She must therefore renounce a policy of exclusive advantages and act as a balance, as her interests require.

What will become of this wise programme when it has to face the test of reality ? Will not Motono unconsciously recover Japanese mentality when he has breathed his native air again for a short time ? It is a secret of the future.

As we were separating he said :

"What about the internal situation in Russia ? Aren't you alarmed at it ?"

"Alarmed ? At the moment, no. Anxious, yes.

Judging by all the information I am getting, the liberal parties in the Duma have made up their minds not to take up any of the government's challenges and to defer their claims. The danger will not come from them; but their intentions may be controlled by events. A military defeat, a famine or palace revolution—that's what I'm particularly afraid of. If any one of those three occurrences materializes it means certain disaster."

Motono was silent. I resumed.

"Don't you think the same?"

Still he did not speak. Then his features contracted as if he were absorbed in some painful reflection, and he said:

"You've interpreted my own view so faithfully that I thought I was hearing myself speak."

\* \* \*

*Friday, October 13, 1916.*

Diamandy, the Russian Minister whom Bratiano has been keeping in Bucharest the last two months, returned to Petrograd this morning after a visit to the *Stavka*. He has been to see me.

"The Emperor received me in the kindest possible way," he said, "and has promised to do everything he can to save Rumania. I am much less satisfied with the results of my talk with General Alexeïev who does not seem to realize how terribly serious the situation is, or else his conduct is dictated by selfish private motives or exclusive regard for his own operations. I was commissioned to ask him to despatch—at once—three army corps to the region between Dorna Vatra and the valley of the Oituz; these three corps should cross the Carpathians at Piatra and Palanka and march due west, that is towards Vasarhely and Klausenburg. The invasion of Wallachia by the southern Carpathians would thereby be stopped at once. But all General Alexeïev consents to do is to send two army corps which are to operate only in the valley of the Bistritza, in the neighbourhood of Dorna Vatra, and keeping in liaison with General Letchitsky's army. These two corps will be drawn from the Riga army so that they

cannot arrive in Transylvania for fifteen or twenty days ! In spite of all my pleading I have not been able to win him over to the views of the Rumanian General Staff."

He then told me with what feelings of grief he had left his country. Our long-standing friendship made it possible for him to speak quite freely. I vigorously maintained that there is nothing fatal about the military failures so far, but that unless the Rumanian people and government pull themselves together at once Rumania is lost beyond hope :

"Whatever happens, your country must take heart and your ministers recover their courage. I can promise you they're going to get a splendid tonic in the person of General Berthelot."

We then discussed the circumstances under which Rumania declared war on Austria and I asked Diamandy a question which, I must admit, has only a historical interest now :

"Why, at the last moment, did Monsieur Bratiano throw over the military agreement which Colonel Rudeanu made with the French and British High Commands at Chantilly on July 23 ?"

"It wasn't an agreement, but simply a plan which had to be ratified by the Rumanian Government."

"If it was only a plan, why did Monsieur Bratiano, after knowing of, and impliedly approving all the work preliminary to the agreement, authorize Colonel Rudeanu to sign it ? In any case, a fact which adequately proves that the French and British High Commands regarded your undertaking as definite is that the Salonica army immediately received orders to prepare to attack the Bulgarians in Macedonia, in order to facilitate the offensive of your army south of the Danube. Between ourselves, were not considerations of an exclusively political nature responsible for the sudden disavowal of the Rudeanu agreement ? Were there not secret negotiations between Bucharest and Sofia at that time ? Didn't Tsar Ferdinand induce Monsieur Bratiano to believe that the continued neutrality of the Bulgarians could be relied on ?"

"I can only repeat that Monsieur Bratiano regarded the Rudeanu agreement simply as a plan which required ratification by the government. The main and vital negotiations were being carried on at Bucharest between General Iliesco and Colonel Tatarinov. Neither of them ever contemplated the idea of a Russo-Rumanian attack south of the Danube, as had been stipulated at Chantilly. In any case, wasn't that a very dangerous plan? In an exposed position on Bulgarian territory, the Rumanian army would have been in a very critical plight if the Germans succeeded in forcing the Carpathians and taking them in rear along the Danube. As for the secret negotiations between Bucharest and Sofia, it is true that Monsieur Radoslavoff made indirect overtures to Monsieur Bratiano, offering him the neutrality of Bulgaria. But it was easy to recognize Tsar Ferdinand's usual cunning in these overtures and the Rumanian cabinet paid hardly any attention to them. Monsieur Bratiano himself has never believed that Bulgaria would remain neutral."

"It would be ill-bred of me to dispute your argument any longer. It will be judged by history, when all the documents are available."

\* \* \*

*Saturday, October 14, 1916.*

B—— has been quoting a proverb which expresses in a very picturesque form the inability of the Russians to discipline themselves voluntarily for the sake of a common effort :

"When three Germans meet they immediately form a *Verein* and elect a president. When two Russians meet, they immediately form three parties."

\* \* \*

*Monday, October 16, 1916.*

A few days ago a curious rumour was circulating in Petrograd ; it was being said in all quarters that Sturmer had at last convinced the Emperor of the necessity of ending the war, if necessary by making a separate peace.

More than twenty people came to ask me about it. To each of them I gave the same answer :

"I don't pay the slightest attention to these silly tales. The Emperor will never betray his allies."

But I thought that the story could not have been so widely credited without the collusion of Sturmer and his gang.

To-day, on the Emperor's orders, the telegraphic agency publishes an official note which is a categorical *démenti* of "the rumours published by certain papers as to the possibility of a separate peace between Russia and Germany."

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, October 17, 1916.*

I have been giving Motono a farewell dinner. My other guests were the President of the Council and Madame Sturmer, the Minister of Communications, Trepov, the Italian Ambassador, the Danish minister and Madame Scavenius, General Volkov, Princess Contacuzene, M. and Madame Polovtsov, Prince and Princess Obolensky, General and the Baroness Wrangel, Princess Lucien Murat, who is about to join her husband in the Caucasus, Vicomte d'Harcourt, who is going to Rumania with a French Red Cross mission, and others. A party of twenty or so.

Madame Sturmer and her husband are remarkably well matched. She has the same type of intellect and the same moral qualities. I was particularly nice to her, as I wanted to get her to talk. She gave me a long panegyric on the Empress. In the flood of encomiums and servility I could recognize the wily practices by which Sturmer has captured the Empress's confidence. He has persuaded that poor, neurotic soul that she is greatly loved by the nation, contrary to her previous conviction that she was hated by all her people.

"Not a day passes," said Madame Sturmer, "without the Empress receiving letters and telegrams which have been sent her by workmen, peasants, priests, soldiers and wounded men. All these lowly people, who are the true

voice of the Russian nation, assure Her Majesty of their warm affection and boundless confidence, and implore her to save Russia."

She artlessly added :

"When my husband was Minister of the Interior he, too, received such letters, either directly or through the provincial governors. It was a great pleasure to him to take them to Her Majesty the Empress."

"That pleasure is now Monsieur Protopopov's."

"Yes, but my husband still has many opportunities of seeing for himself how greatly Her Majesty is revered and loved in the country."

Making a great show of sympathy for her worthy husband, with his heavy burden of work, I led her on to tell me how he employed his time. And I can see that all his activities are inspired by the Empress and culminate in her.

During the evening, I questioned Trepov about the economic crisis which is raging in Russia and trying the public nerves.

"The food problem," he said, "has certainly become very worrying; but the opposition parties misuse it to attack the government. I'll tell you frankly what the position is. In the first place, the crisis is far from being general; it attains serious proportions only in the towns and certain rural areas. But it is true that the public is nervous in certain cities, Moscow for example. On the other hand, there is no shortage of food, except certain products which we used to import from abroad. But the means of transport are inadequate and the method of distribution is defective. Active measures are about to be ordered. I assure you that in a very short time the situation will improve, and I hope that in a month at the outside the present discontent will have vanished."

He added in a confidential tone :

"I should like to have a quiet talk with you, Ambassador. When could you receive me?"

"I think I'll come and see you. It would be better to have our talk at your ministry."



With a glance at Sturmer he replied :

" Yes, it would be better."

We arranged to meet the day after to-morrow.

I went up to Baron Wrangel who was talking to my military attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Lavergne, and my naval attaché, Commander Gallaud. He is aide-de-camp to the Grand Duke Michael, the Emperor's brother, and was giving them his impressions of the operations in Galicia.

" There is now a deadlock on the Russian front, from one end to the other," he said. " You must not expect any further offensive on our side. In any case we're helpless against the Germans ; we shall never beat them."

\* \* \*

Wednesday, October 18, 1916.

Calling on Madame C—— to-day, I found her absorbed in a lively discussion with three friends.

They were talking about a certain *liaison*, a recent *liaison* which seemed to have a delightful future before it, but has just been mysteriously broken off. All four of them were hard at work conjecturing the causes of the rupture. The mystery was particularly thrilling to them because the parties to the romance are no ordinary people. But they could find nothing.

But it had to end somehow. Then one of the callers, Countess O——, a young and pretty widow, long of limb, quiet in her movements, hard-faced and with sparkling, dark-ringed eyes, gave utterance to the following aphorism :

" We women always yield too soon. The moment the man has made us his own he has achieved his object ; he has no further interest in us ; he has finished with us. But when we give ourselves, we women think that our happiness is only just beginning. And so, all our lives we pursue love because we cannot bring ourselves to believe that these beginnings have no sequel."

Thereupon she lapsed into silence, with a face that was simply a mask, and mechanically holding to her lips the pearl pendant which hung from her neck.

Thursday, October 19, 1916.

Trepov received me at two o'clock in his room at the Ministry of Communications which looks out on the Yussupov gardens.

Discussing the economic crisis, he repeated what he said to me at the embassy the day before yesterday, supporting his argument with figures. Then with that sometimes brutal candour which is one of his characteristics, he spoke of the alliance and the objects it has set before it. He added :

"We are at a critical moment. What is being decided at the present moment between the Danube and the Carpathians is the issue, or rather the length of the war. The issue of the war can—*must* no longer be in doubt. Quite recently I reported to the Emperor who allowed me to say exactly what I thought, and I had the satisfaction of finding that he agreed with me as to the necessity not only of saving Rumania but of attacking Bulgaria with all our might as soon as the Rumanian army has received some reinforcement and gained war experience. It is in the Balkan peninsula—not elsewhere—that we can hope to obtain a decisive result in the near future. If we don't, the war will go on indefinitely—and at what risk !"

I congratulated him on his fearless advocacy of views I argued to Sturmer more than a month ago, and added :

"As we are talking *entre nous*, I will not conceal from you that I am very unfavourably impressed by the pessimistic rumours which are being spread abroad in every quarter. I feel it all the more because this propaganda is patently inspired by persons in high social or political positions."

"I suppose you are referring to those people who are clamouring for the end of the war at any price and Russia's return to the system of Teutonic alliances ? First let me tell you that they are all mad. Peace without victory, complete victory, means an immediate revolution. The individuals in question would be its first victims ! But there's more than that : there's the determination of the Emperor. That determination is unshakable : no amount of influence will ever make him yield. Only the other

day he repeated that he would never forgive the Emperor William for his insults and double-dealing, would refuse to make peace with the Hohenzollerns and continue the war until the hegemony of Prussia is destroyed."

"Then why does he let M. Sturmer and M. Protopopov, who are notoriously contravening his intentions, remain in power?"

"Because he's weak! But he's as stubborn as he's weak. It's a curious thing, but there it is!"

"No, it's not curious at all. Psychologists will tell you that stubbornness is only a form of weakness, and so his present obstinacy does not really console me. Men who know his temperament will not defy him to his face; they'll act behind his back. One fine day they'll present him with a *fait accompli* and he'll give way, or, to speak more accurately, give up the fight and accept what seems inevitable."

"No, no! I believe in my Emperor. But it's more than ever necessary to have the courage to tell him the truth."

Our talk had lasted more than an hour. I rose to leave. But before reaching the door I stopped at the window a moment to gaze at the picture of the Yussupov gardens which adjoin the Minister's town residence. It was almost dark and snow was falling: it was as if night and the snow were softly descending together in slow flakes and mist.

After a perplexed silence Trepov walked up to me and then, as if he had suddenly come to a bold decision, he rapped out:

"I shall be seeing the Emperor again in a few days' time. Have I your authority to report our conversation?"

"I not only authorize, but ask you to do so."

"Suppose he asks me to what persons you are referring?"

"You can name M. Sturmer and M. Protopopov; you may add that though officially I have no complaint to make about them, I am none the less satisfied that they are hostile to the alliance, and that they work for it against their will and are preparing to betray it."

"I'll tell him that, word for word. No doubt you

realize the gravity of the matters we have been discussing. May I absolutely count on your keeping everything to yourself ? ”

“ You have my promise.”

“ Good-bye. Our talk may have great results ! ”

“ It all depends on you. Good-bye.”

\* \* \*

*Saturday, October 21, 1916.*

Of all the secret agents kept by Germany among Russian society I doubt whether there is any more energetic, astute and untiring than the financier Manus.

A Jew by confession, he employed the usual methods to obtain permission to reside in Petrograd and in recent years has made a considerable fortune by operations on the stock exchange and speculation. The genius of his race had inspired him to throw in his lot with the most rabid defenders of the throne and the altar. It was thus that he became a servile tool of old Prince Mestchersky, the famous director of the *Grajdanine* and the fearless champion of orthodox absolutism. At the same time his discreet and well-placed generosity gradually won over the whole of the Rasputin gang to his cause.

Since the beginning of the war he has been conducting a campaign in favour of a speedy reconciliation between Russia and the Teutonic powers. He gets a good hearing in the financial world and has established links with most of the papers. He is in regular touch with Stockholm—which means Berlin. I strongly suspect that he is the main channel of distribution for German subsidies.

Every Wednesday he gives a dinner to Rasputin ; Admiral Nilov, the aide-de-camp of the Emperor and employed in his service, is invited on principle by virtue of his superb deportment under the influence of wine. Another indispensable guest is the ex-director of the Police department, the fearsome Bielezky, who is now a senator ; but he has preserved all his influence with the *Okbrana* and through Madame Virubova he is in constant touch with the Empress. Of course there are some

charming ladies to grace and enliven the festivities. One of the regular guests is a ravishing Georgian, Madame E——, a lady who is as lithe, ingratiating and coaxing as a syren. They drink all night. Rasputin gets drunk very quickly and then talks his head off. I have no doubt that a detailed description of these orgies is sent off to Berlin next morning—with appropriate comments and proofs.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, October 22, 1916.*

General Bielaiev, who is going to represent the Russian High Command in Rumania, has been to say good-bye.

He tells me that in addition to the two Russian army corps which have already been sent to Moldavia and are to try and enter Transylvania by Palanka, a third corps will leave on November 7 for Wallachia, where it will operate between the Danube and the Carpathians side by side with the Rumanian army. He is commissioned to tell King Ferdinand that "the Emperor is considering the possibility of sending further reinforcements later on."

I impressed on General Bielaiev that this later reinforcement seemed to me extremely urgent :

"The character of the operations in the Balkan theatre is becoming more and more decisive every day—and in whose favour? The Dobrudja is lost. Constanza is about to fall. All the defiles of the Transylvanian Alps have been forced. Winter is approaching. The least delay is irreparable."

He agreed :

"I have pleaded strenuously with the Emperor and General Alexeiev for an army of three or four corps to be sent in the direction of Bucharest without delay. There it would amalgamate with the Rumanian army. We should thus have a fine mass of manœuvre in the heart of Rumania and it would enable us not only to close the Carpathian passes but even to invade Bulgaria. The Emperor came round to my view ; he realizes the necessity of gaining a great success in the Balkans here and now. But General Alexeiev will not consent to weaken the Russian front ;

he fears that the Germans would take advantage of it to improvise an offensive in the region of Riga."

"But it's for the Emperor to give orders. General Alexeiev is only his technical adviser and must carry out his orders!"

"Yes, but His Majesty would hesitate long before imposing his will on General Alexeiev."

I questioned General Bielaiev about the Emperor's state of mind. He was obviously uncomfortable as he replied:

"His Majesty is depressed and preoccupied. Sometimes when you are speaking to him, he seems not to be listening to you. I was not happy about him."

As we were separating, he reminded me of all the serious confidences we have exchanged since the war began and thanked me for the welcome I had always given him. His last words were:

"We have difficult times, very difficult times ahead of us."

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, October 24, 1916.*

Contrary to Trepov's anticipations, the economic situation has got worse instead of better. One of my informers, who went through the industrial quarters of Galernaia and Narvskaia yesterday, tells me that there is much distress and bad feeling. The ministers are openly accused of causing a food shortage in order to provoke riots and thus have an excuse for taking strong measures against the socialist organizations. In the factories the workmen are passing round pamphlets inciting labour to strike and demand peace. Where do these pamphlets come from? No one knows. Some say that they are distributed by German agents, others by the *Okhrana*. Everyone is saying, "it cannot go on like this." The *bolsheviki*, or extremists, are very active, organizing councils in the barracks and announcing that "the great day of the proletariat is at hand."

I put a question to my informer, who is intelligent, moderately honest and moves in liberal circles:

"Do you think there is reasonable ground for crediting Sturmer or Protopopov with the machiavellian idea of causing famine in order to provoke strikes and thus make the continuation of the war impossible?"

He answered:

"Why, *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur*, that's the whole history of Russia! Since the time of Peter the Great and his famous secret chancellery, it has always been the police which has fomented popular risings in order to have the credit of saving the throne. If the continuation of the war means a danger to tsarism, you may be certain that M. Sturmer and M. Protopopov will have recourse to the classic methods of the *Okhrana*. But next time it will be different from 1905."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, October 25, 1916.*

The Austro-Bulgarians captured Constanza yesterday. We have now lost not only the right bank of the Danube—with the possibility of a subsequent offensive in the direction of the Balkan mountains—but also the Danube delta, and with it the most direct route between southern Russia and Rumania, between Odessa and Galatz. The problem of supplying the Russian and Rumanian armies will soon become insoluble.

Diamandy has been to see me; he was in despair.

"I'm simply worn out with pleading for further Russian contingents to be sent. I'm told at headquarters here that they can only refer the matter to General Alexeïev. I know what that means. When I apply to Sturmer, all he does is to raise his eyes to the ceiling and repeat: 'Cheer up! Providence is so great and good! Oh, so good!'"

"It shows that M. Sturmer is not a jansenist; M. de Saint Cyran was quite different; he used to say: 'God is terrible! God is terrible!'"

"But what am I to do?"

"See the Emperor."

"Seriously, is that what you advise?"

"What else can you do, alas?"

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*Thursday, October 26, 1916.*

The Rumanians have evacuated the whole of the Dobrudja : they have also had to leave the enemy in possession of the famous Cerna Voda bridge over the Danube, the spot at which the principal railways of Wallachia and Moldavia converge.





### CHAPTER III

OCTOBER 27—NOVEMBER 22, 1916.

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The Empress's increasing influence on the government of the Empire.—Strikes in Petrograd: the troops fire on the police.—Frequency of divorce in Russian society; deterioration of moral standards since *Anna Karenina*.—Count Witte's crime in 1914.—The Central Powers proclaim the autonomy of Russian Poland under an hereditary monarchy.—Indignation in Petrograd and Moscow at this news.—Protopopov's reactionary policy: memories of the "Black Bands".—Opening of the Duma: the government's declaration; the ministers leave the chamber; Miliukov's violent indictment of Sturmer; various expressions of public opinion.—Frequency of suicide in Russia; a symptom of social disintegration.—The magician, Papus, and the Russian sovereigns: a spiritualistic *séance* at Tsarskoïe-Selo in 1905; a prophecy of revolution.—Death of the Emperor Francis Joseph.

*Friday, October 27, 1916.*

This afternoon the Grand Duchess Marie opened an exhibition at the corner of the Champ-de-Mars and the Moïka, of prothetic appliances for facial injuries. She asked me to meet her there.

The weather outside was depressing in the extreme. Through a sky which was the colour of slate or lead filtered a dull, wan, pallid light, the kind of light that accompanies an eclipse. The surface of the great square was simply a marsh of slimy mud and brackish pools. Snowflakes were slowly whirling. In the background the Expiatory Church of the Resurrection was wrapped in mist like a transparent veil.

I went through the various rooms with the Grand Duchess. The wan light which came through the windows made this melancholy exhibition seem still more depressing. In every showcase photographs, plaster masks and wax figures alternated with appliances for demonstrating their working and uses. All these torn and battered faces, with bones fractured or missing and in some cases deprived of all resemblance to the human countenance, made a

loathsome picture for which no word can be found in any tongue. The most disordered imagination could not conceive such a museum of horrors. Goya himself has never reached such nightmare heights: those terrible etchings in which he delights to depict scenes of massacre and torture pale beside these monstrous realities.

The Grand Duchess was heaving sighs of pity or covering her eyes with her hand the whole time. When we had been through all the galleries she rested for a few minutes in a private room. She made me sit down beside her and then, assuming a casual expression, as we were under observation, she murmured:

"Please say something comforting, *mon cher ambassadeur*! I was terribly depressed when I arrived and now these horrible sights make me feel simply overwhelmed. Do cheer me up at once!"

"But why were you so depressed when you arrived?"

"Because . . . because . . . Need I tell you?"

Then she rapidly gave me a list of the reasons for her anxiety. On the Russian front Brussilov's offensive is held up, without any decisive result. In Rumania disaster is inevitable and imminent. At home war-weariness, despondency and anger are growing every day. The winter is beginning under the most sinister auspices.

I cheered her up with several variations on my usual theme. "Whatever may happen," I said, "France and England will go on fighting until complete victory. That victory cannot escape them now, as it is perfectly clear that Germany is as incapable of crushing them as of carrying on the war indefinitely. If Russia deserted her allies to-day, which is unthinkable, she would at once find herself in the camp of the vanquished. It would mean not only eternal disgrace for her, but national suicide." I ended by asking her a question:

"Is the explanation of your anxiety that you have lost confidence in the Emperor?"

Taken aback by the suddenness of my question, she fixed a haggard eye upon me for a moment. Then she answered in a low tone:

"The Emperor? I shall always believe in him. But

there's the Empress as well. I know both of them well. The worse things get, the greater will be Alexandra Feodorovna's influence, because her will is active, aggressive and restless. His will, on the other hand, is merely negative. When he ceases to believe in himself and thinks God has abandoned him, he does not try to assert himself, but merely wraps himself up in a dull and resigned obstinacy. Just see how powerful the Empress already is ! Before long she'll be the sole ruler of Russia ! ”

\* \* \*

*Saturday, October 28, 1916.*

I have been thinking over my talk with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna yesterday.

The fact is that making allowances for her mystical aberrations, the Empress is a stronger character than the Emperor, her will is more tenacious, her mind more active, her virtues more positive and her whole spirit more militant and regal. Her idea of saving tsarism by bringing it back to the traditions of theocratic absolutism is madness, but the proud obstinacy she displays is not without an element of grandeur. The rôle she has assumed in affairs of state is disastrous, but she certainly plays it like a tsarina. When she appears in “that terrible valley of Josaphat,” *vietoï oujassnoï doline josaphata*, of which Rasputin is always telling her, she will be able to point not only to the irreproachable honesty of her intentions but also to the fact that her actions have been absolutely consistent with the principles of divine right on which Russian autocracy is founded.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, October 31, 1916.*

For the last two days all the factories in Petrograd have been on strike. The workmen left the shops without giving any reason, and simply on an order issued by some mysterious committee.

This evening there was a dinner in Motono's honour at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

As I finished dressing at half-past seven, I was told that two French industrialists, Sicaut and Beaupied, were asking to see me. They are representatives of the "Louis Renault" motor-car house and in charge of a large factory in the Viborg quarter.

I received them at once. They said to me :

" *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur*, you know we've never had anything but praise for our workpeople, because they've never had anything but praise for us. So they've refused to join in the general strike. While work was in full swing this afternoon, a party of strikers from the Baranovsky works besieged our establishment, shouting : 'Down with the French ! No more war !' Our engineers and foremen wanted to parley with them. They were received with stones and revolver shots. One French engineer and three French foremen were seriously wounded. The police had meanwhile arrived and soon realized that they could not cope with the situation. A squad of gendarmes then succeeded in forcing a way through the crowd, and went to fetch two infantry regiments which are in barracks quite near. The two regiments appeared a few minutes later, but instead of raising the siege of our factory they fired on the police."

"On the police !"

"Yes, *monsieur l'Ambassadeur* ; you can see the bullet marks on our walls. . . . A number of *gorodovoï* and gendarmes were killed. A stand-up fight followed. At length we heard the gallop of the Cossacks, four regiments of them. They charged the infantrymen and drove them back to their barracks at the point of the lance. Order has now been restored."

I thanked them for their promptness in letting me know of the incident, as it would enable me to tell the President of the Council all about it to-night.

At the Ministry the scene was as sumptuous as at the recent dinner to Prince Kanin. After greeting Madame Sturmer, I took the President of the Council aside and told him of what had just occurred at the Renault works. He tried to demonstrate that it is a trivial episode, adding that the Prefect of Police had already reported the matter to

him on the telephone, and that all measures had been taken to protect the works.

"The fact remains that the troops fired on the police," I said. "That's what makes it so serious—extremely serious."

"Yes, it's serious ; but it will be punished mercilessly."

I left him to his guests, who were pouring in. To reach our places at table we had to pass through a forest of palms. There were so many of them and their foliage was so luxuriant that it was like being in a jungle.

I sat between Madame Narishkin, Grand Mistress of the Court, and Lady Georgina Buchanan. Madame Narishkin, a worthy and congenial dowager, told me of her life at Tsarskoïe-Selo. 'Maid of Honour to Their Majesties the Empresses,' 'Lady of the Order of Saint Catherine,' and 'High Excellency,' she carries her seventy-four years with a pleasant and kindly grace which likes nothing better than "reminiscing." This evening she was in a disconsolate mood.

"My duties as Grand Mistress make practically no demand on my time. Every now and then I have a private audience or a family function ; that's all. When the Emperor returns from the Stavka he sees no one except in working hours and shuts himself up in his private apartments. The Empress is almost always ill. . . . She is greatly to be pitied."

She then told me of the many charitable organizations in which she is interested, homes for the aged, war hospitals, schools for apprentices, rescue work among prisoners, and so on.

"You can see that I'm not idle," she said. "In the evening, after dinner, I always go to see my old friends, the Benckendorffs. Like myself, they reside in the palace, but at the other end. We talk about the present, but not much, and a lot about the past. I leave them about midnight. To reach my room I have to pass through the endless series of huge rooms you have seen. At long intervals there's an electric light. An old servant goes in front of me to open the doors. It's a long walk and anything but enlivening. I often wonder whether these rooms will ever

see the splendours and glories of other days again. What a multitude of things are coming to an end, Ambassador! And such a bad end! I oughtn't to say that to you. But we all regard you as a real friend and think aloud in your presence."

I thanked her for her trust in me and took advantage of it to tell her that the sky would soon clear if the Emperor worked together with his people and appealed straight to the national conscience. She replied:

"That's what we sometimes tell him—very cautiously. He listens to us quietly—and talks of something else."

And imitating her august master she too talked of something else.

I incidentally uttered the name of the lovely Marie Alexandrovna D——, formally Countess K——, whose delicate purity of form and supple harmony of line always remind me of Houdon's *Diane*. Madame Narishkin remarked:

"That charming lady has followed the new and universal fashion. She's divorced her husband. What for? Nothing! Sergei Alexandrovitch K—— was a model husband to her; she never had any complaint against him. But one day she fell in love, or thought she fell in love with D——, a mediocrity and inferior in every way to Sergei Alexandrovitch, and though she has had two daughters by the latter she left him to marry the other. I can assure you that in the old days divorces were very rare; there had to be very serious and quite exceptional reasons. The position of a divorced woman was as difficult as possible."

"I admit that the frequency of divorce is one of the things that have struck me most here. The other day I was calculating that in more than half the *ménages* in my social circle there are one or two divorced spouses. Have you observed, Madame, that no one understands the story of *Anna Karenina* nowadays? And yet I believe the book was only written in 1876! To-day, Anna Karenina would have immediately divorced her husband and married Vronsky, and there the story would have ended."

"That's perfectly true! It gives you an idea of what a social scourge divorce has become."



"Isn't the Holy Synod largely responsible? After all, it alone grants divorces, its exclusive right."

"Unfortunately the Holy Synod is not the great moral authority it used to be."

I refrained from quoting to Madame Narishkin Seneca's remark about the young patrician women of his day: "They reckon their age not by the consulates, but by their marriages; they divorce to marry and marry to divorce."

Dinner ended at last. We had been at table an hour and a half!

In the smokeroom I tackled Sturmer about the strikes and incidents of this afternoon. But his reception had made him so pleased and proud that I did not succeed in damping his optimism.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, November 1, 1916.*

For the last five days the Salonica army has been attacking the Bulgarians without respite. The main operation is developing in the lower bend of the Cerna; its objective is Monastir.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, November 2, 1916.*

Viscount Motono, who has been to present his letters of recall to the Emperor, has been giving me his impressions of the *Stavka*.

"I have no doubt," he said, "that the Emperor is determined to continue the war at any cost. He told me so in terms, and with an accent of sincerity, which would have convinced the most sceptical. So I exclude any possibility of a separate, or even premature, peace. But I have observed once more how ill-informed the Emperor is, and what little interest he takes in affairs of State. He did not seem to realize that I have been called upon to direct the foreign policy of my country and that there is a certain connection between the interests of Japan and those of Russia. He did not say a word about the task

I am taking up : he did not ask me a single question. He was extremely kind, of course. But his remarks could not have been more commonplace and vague if I had simply come to tell him that I had been transferred to Washington or Madrid."

"Did you have a talk with General Alexeïev ?" I asked him. "What's your opinion of the Russian army ?"

"Oh yes, I had a long talk with General Alexeïev. I said nothing about the operations in Rumania : I should have had too much to say on that subject ! You know that he doesn't like civilians meddling in strategy. My special topic was the orders placed with our industries. As regards the Russian army, he told me voluntarily that it is in excellent condition and its *moral* is very high, as witness Brussilov's offensive. The Japanese officers who are visiting various parts of the front tell me that the men are in good fettle and high spirits. But they also tell me that their training is very defective. The system of tactics has remained practically what it was at the beginning of the war. Heavy artillery and flying tactics are particularly backward ; one might almost call them primitive. It is actually worth considering whether the heavy guns which are now being manufactured for Russia in France and England had not better be kept on the western front where they could be put to much better purpose. Yet the fact remains that the Russian army, such as it is, represents a solid mass which puts enormous pressure on our enemies."

"So we must henceforth look to it for the effects of mass rather than shock action ?"

"Yes, the effect of mass, and no more."

"What about the internal situation ?"

"It's bad ! People are patently tired of the war. Yet I don't believe the Russian nation would accept a peace which did not give it Constantinople."

As it was our last time together we reviewed our common memories. How many things—and what things—we have seen together ! How many impressions have we exchanged in words, and sometimes with a mere glance !

As he rose to go, Motono said to me :

"Before we separate, my friend, I want to tell you a last secret which will complete your education on certain intrigues we often discussed together at the beginning of the war. It's something about Count Witte and relates to the bad days of December, 1914, when public opinion in Russia was so despondent over the defeats in Poland. You may remember that at that time Russia, France and England were anxious to make joint representations at Tokio to persuade us to send an army to Europe. Now Witte came to see me one morning. He fixed his eyes hard upon me and said at once, with that haughty assurance you will remember: 'I know that your government is going to be asked to send troops to Europe. It must do nothing of the kind! It would be madness. Believe me, Russia's at the end of her tether; tsarism is on the point of perishing. And don't think France and England will ever regain the upper hand. Victory cannot slip from Germany's grasp now. . . .' A man who was a former minister of the Tsar, the man who signed the Treaty of Portsmouth, had the audacity to say that to *me*, the Ambassador of Japan!"

"It doesn't surprise me, if it was Witte. To my mental picture of his haughty, self-centred personality, this act of felony simply adds a bold feature which completes it perfectly. His outstanding characteristics were a thirst for power and intellectual pride. He belonged to the race of men of boundless ambition who do not admit defeat. Hence his arrogance and sarcasms, the bitterness of his hatreds, and the ever-increasing boldness of his intrigues. It is only logical that his character and the course of events should have carried him even to the stage of treason. But what must have been the conflict of feeling within him before he reached that stage and could bring himself to say to you anything so infamous as: 'Your government must not help my country, as it is at the end of its tether?' Just think of the accumulated grudges, miscalculations, thwarted hopes, jealous and smouldering rage, well fanned and pondered hatreds an action such as that presupposes! I shall read Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* again this evening."

*Friday, November 3, 1916.*

During the last few days a curious rumour has been going round in germanophile circles in Petrograd ; it has been mentioned to me by several people, two of whom, sound and sensible persons, have actually assured me that its origin is to be found in a categorical statement by Protopopov.

The theory which these circles are complacently discussing is as follows : " It is now obvious that Russia will never be able to win Constantinople by force of arms. In any case, whatever England and France may have promised, they will never allow the empire of the Tsars to annex the Straits : Germany alone is in a position to secure Constantinople for Russia, as she has only to leave the Turks to their fate ; she is prepared to do so if Russia will realize where her true interests lie and agree to sign peace at once. What a great day it will be when Slavism and Teutonism make up their quarrel under the dome of Santa Sophia ! "

\* \* \*

*Sunday, November 5, 1916.*

At the Marie Theatre this evening I saw a number of delightful ballets, the *Nuits Egyptiennes*, *Islamey*, *Eros*. The entire audience seemed fascinated by these charming fairy tales, scenes of fantasy and passion, the whole atmosphere of mystery and enchantment.

During one of the intervals I went to smoke a cigarette in the Minister of the Court's box. There I found General W—— whose duties keep him in daily touch with the garrison of Petrograd. As I had an opportunity of doing him a service quite recently and know that he is inspired by feelings of the deepest patriotism, I asked him :

" Is it true that the troops in Petrograd have been seriously contaminated by revolutionary propaganda and that there is an idea of sending most of them to the front and replacing them by reliable regiments ? "

He hesitated a few moments and then candidly replied :

" Quite true ; the spirit of the Petrograd garrison isn't good. We saw that a week ago, when the mutiny in the

Viborg quarter occurred. But I don't believe there's any idea of sending the bad regiments to the front and replacing them by sound units. In my opinion, the troops guarding the capital ought to have been weeded out long ago. In the first place there are far too many of them. Do you realize, Ambassador, that there are not less than one hundred and seventy thousand men in Petrograd and the vicinity, Tsarskoïe-Selo, Pavlovsk, Gatchina, Krasnoïe-Selo and Peterhof? They hardly ever do any drill; they are badly officered; they are at a loose end and thoroughly corrupt, in fact they're good for nothing but to supply cadres and recruits for the army of anarchy. We ought not to keep in Petrograd more than forty thousand men, selected from the best elements in the guard, and twenty thousand Cossacks. With such a picked force we should be in a position to deal with any and every eventuality. Otherwise . . ."

He stopped; his lips were twitching and he looked very agitated. I pressed him as a friend to continue. He gravely resumed:

"If God does not spare us a revolution, it will be started not by the people, but by the army!"

\* \* \*

*Monday, November 6, 1916.*

My English colleague was received by the Emperor at Tsarskoïe-Selo to-day.

His Majesty shows himself as determined as ever to continue the war until the triumph of our coalition is complete. Sir George Buchanan then alluded to the manoeuvres on which the advocates of a separate peace are openly engaged in so many quarters, and in so many ways. The Emperor replied:

"The leaders of this campaign are traitors."

My colleague then asked:

"Has not Your Majesty heard it said that if Russia would agree to separate from her allies, Germany would leave Constantinople to her?"

The Emperor vaguely shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, someone mentioned that to me. But who was it? I can't remember now. Perhaps it was M. Protopopov? In any case, I don't attach the slightest importance to it . . ."

I have telegraphed this news to Briand and added:

*The Emperor has thus once again affirmed his determination to continue the war until full and final victory. But if so, why does he not put a stop to the manœuvres my English colleague denounced to him, and which he himself branded so appropriately? Why does he give his confidence and delegate his authority to ministers so tainted and compromised as M. Sturmer, M. Protopopov and several others? And why does he suffer his own palace to be that hotbed of intrigues of which the Empress is the centre?*

*And yet a nod from him would be enough to put everything right at once. But weakness of will or fatalism makes him prefer to hide himself away in Mobilev for months with his generals, thus leaving the Empress and the ministers who take their inspiration from her in undisputed possession of the field.*

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, November 7, 1916.*

At the suggestion of the cabinet of London, the Allied Governments have decided that a military and diplomatic conference shall assemble in Petrograd quite shortly, with a view to giving effect to the discussions which have just concluded in Paris.

Sturmer is beside himself with delight: he already sees himself a grand and glittering figure in the capacity of president, making a name for himself in history and eclipsing the glory of Talleyrand, Metternich, Bismarck and Gortchakov.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, November 8, 1916.*

The Emperors of Germany and Austria have just proclaimed the autonomy of Russian Poland under a system of hereditary monarchy. The Emperor Francis Joseph has also issued a rescript granting autonomy to Galicia.

In announcing this piece of news, the Petrograd papers are protesting against this "cynical violation of the rights of nations."

I ended my day by turning into the Yacht Club. In the midst of an excited group, Prince Viazemsky, Prince Victor Kotchubey, General Svetchin, Prince Engalytchev, Nicholas Balaschov, Prince Urussov and others were indignantly holding forth.

"It's an outrage! What an affront to our history! What an insult to the Emperor! The crown of Poland is torn from his head!"

And then there was a flood of charges and imprecations against "the Polish betrayal," no one doubting that if Poland has become subject to German allegiance, it is a result of a conspiracy of all the Poles. So it is being said that Russia owes them nothing more, that they have torn up the manifesto of August 14, 1914, with their own hands, and they are being threatened with terrible reprisals.

Prince Viazemsky took me into a corner and said:

"You may take it from me, Ambassador, that all this would not have happened if people in France and England had not taken up the cause of Polish independence so warmly."

I replied somewhat drily:

"To my knowledge the French Government has never recommended to the Russian Government anything more than the complete autonomy of Poland. And even now that is still His Majesty's intention."

\* \* \*

*Thursday, November 9, 1916.*

This morning one hundred and fifty men of the regiments which fired on the police on October 31 have been shot. The news of the execution spread to the factories about ten o'clock. The workmen have immediately gone on strike as a protest.

General Sukhomlinov, ex-Minister of War, who was incarcerated in the fortress of Petrograd last April on charges of treason and collusion, has been released for the time being on the ground of ill-health.

His poor condition, physical and mental, would appear to justify this measure of indulgence, but the public simply regards it as another ground for abusing Sturmer.

Count Sigismond Wielopolski and Count Sobanski have just been to see me. They are angry at the charge of treachery which the party of the extreme Right is making broadcast against the Poles. Wielopolski said to me :

"For pity's sake get your government to say something, in fact *anything*, to show the Poles that France will not abandon them when peace is made !"

I replied that the provinces of Russian Poland will certainly be reconquered as the Emperor has sworn that he will never sign peace so long as a single enemy soldier remains on the territory of the Empire.

"The Polish question will then be put in really practical terms. And, of course, Poland knows that France will never abandon her."

As for France "saying anything," it would hardly be opportune, if I am to judge by the remark Prince Viazemsky made to me yesterday.

The Anglo-French offensive on the Somme has not produced the great results which have followed the Russian offensive in Galicia, but for all that it has been very fruitful. Between July 1 and November 1, the allied troops have captured seventy-one thousand five hundred men, one thousand five hundred officers, three hundred guns and one thousand machine-guns.

\* \* \*

*Friday, November 10, 1916.*

By proclaiming the autonomy of Poland under a new dynasty the Teutonic Emperors have wounded a fibre of Russian nationalism which is still very sensitive. It is in Moscow and Kiev that the blow has been felt most deeply.

The Government has therefore decided to protest against the manifesto of November 5.

Sturmer read to me the protest which he had drawn up. I found it colourless and insipid.



"It's not enough to protest against such an act: you *must* declare it null and void."

"Yes, perhaps that would be better."

"It's essential."

Faithful to his customary tactics of always avoiding inconvenient pressure, he promised me to frame his protest in somewhat stronger language.

At that point Buchanan came in.

He read us a telegram from the *Foreign Office* informing him that the British Government is disposed to publish the agreement relating to Constantinople as soon as the Russian Government thinks the publication desirable and opportune. He added that he is invited to act with me in the matter if and when I have the necessary instructions.

As I have not yet received these instructions, I could only take part in the ensuing conversation between us three in a purely personal and unofficial capacity. It gave me a much freer hand to question Sturmer and express my own opinion.

First of all I frankly said that the weakening of the national will in Russia and the manœuvres of the germanophile party fill me with apprehension. I mentioned several instances. Sturmer did not dispute them, but confined himself to minimizing their symptomatic importance. Buchanan bore me out. The inference I drew was that if the Government did not take immediate steps to counteract the general depression and this epidemic of apathy, pessimism and slackness, things would go from bad to worse.

"You'll find yourselves in the bad days of 1905 again, and pass straight into revolution!"

Sturmer spluttered out vague denials. The turn the conversation was taking made him obviously uncomfortable. On Buchanan and myself he kept switching that sidelong and unsteady glance which at moments gives his crafty face a grotesquely base, cowardly and cunning expression. At length he said:

"The most encouraging thing for our people would be the certainty of getting Constantinople after the war.

His Majesty the Emperor told me so only the other day."

Buchanan remarked that the telegram he had just read to us was on all fours with the Emperor's idea. He hopes that the French Government also will agree to publish the agreement relating to Constantinople.

"I imagine it will," I said, "and hope so. To make assurance doubly sure I will telegraph to that effect. But I can't help anticipating certain objections. Won't public opinion in France be surprised, or indeed disconcerted, by the publication of our agreement? Won't it insist on further information? Won't it want to know what will be France's share of this oriental booty of which Russia gets the tit-bit? I must wait to hear what Monsieur Briand thinks. But as we are talking informally, may I tell you all that is in my mind. Don't you think that you would be acting more in the spirit of the alliance if you aimed at both Turkey and Germany by announcing the vital results Russia is determined to obtain from the war? In my opinion your proclamation would be incomplete, and in danger of being misunderstood by your allies, if you mentioned Constantinople and said nothing about Poland. I don't see how you can authoritatively repeat your claims to Constantinople without simultaneously declaring that Poland will be restored in her entirety under the sceptre of the Romanovs, in conformity with the manifesto of August 14, 1914."

The corners of the agitated and cautious Sturmer's mouth drooped—a sign of disapproval.

After an evasive stammer, he said something to the effect that the publication of the Constantinople agreement should at any rate precede the proclamation of Polish autonomy: there was a flash of honest patriotism in his eyes as he gravely declared:

"I'm more anxious to satisfy the Russian nation than the people of Poland."

I objected that the forced and sudden subjection of Poland to the Teutonic empires demanded an immediate reply:

"It's an excellent thing to tell the world that the Emperor Nicholas is determined to take the crown of

Byzantium, but simultaneously he must have the crown of Poland put back on his head."

"I'll consider the matter."

I heard this evening that Sturmer took the two o'clock train to Tsarskoïe-Selo and had a long audience with the Empress, though this is not his regular "report" day.

The position of the armies at grips on the Eastern front between the Baltic and the Black Sea, is as follows:

(1) On the Russian front: one hundred and forty Russian divisions face sixty-three German, forty-one Austro-Hungarian and two Turkish divisions, i.e. a total of one hundred and six divisions; (2) on the Rumanian front: twenty-four Rumanian and nine Russian divisions face twenty Austro-German, eight Bulgarian and two Turkish divisions, i.e. thirty-three divisions against thirty.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, November 11, 1916.*

Sturmer was beaming with assurance and cordiality when he received me this morning. Holding my hand in his, he said:

"I was very perplexed when you left me yesterday. I have fully considered what you said; I've been thinking about it all night."

"I'm sorry I disturbed your sleep!"

"God is so good that he never lets me feel how tired my heavy responsibilities make me."

"What has been the result of your nocturnal meditations?"

"I've entirely come round to your views. Like you, I think that we must now link up the questions of Poland and Constantinople. All that remains is to secure the assent of His Majesty the Emperor."

I asked him about the Duma, which is to resume its work in three days' time:

"Many of the deputies are back already," I said. "What do you know of their state of mind?"

"The deputies of the progressive group have returned with the most evil intentions. They want to turn the

temporary and grossly exaggerated difficulty of the shortage of supplies to the towns into a weapon against the Government. But we shall not allow ourselves to be intimidated and we shall know how to restrict the Duma to the functions His Majesty has condescended to assign to it."

We discussed various topics of the day and then I left.

As he was opening the door we saw the Minister of the Interior, Protopopov, in the room leading into his.

He has designed a civil general's uniform for himself; it is field dress, with a sword-belt of undressed leather, high boots with spurs and the ribbon of some order round the neck.

We exchanged a few pleasant commonplaces. Protopopov is far ahead of Sturmer as regards intellect and *savoir-faire*; his conversation is not without a certain charm and it makes him all the more dangerous. In any case, his grotesque costume and the steady brilliance of his eyes would be enough to betray his megalomania, an advanced symptom of the general paralysis which will soon have him in its clutches.

As I was leaving these two men, I remembered Royer-Collard's remark about Polignac and Peyronnet, the last ministers of Charles X: "From the moment they attained to power they had the ordinances written on their faces."

In the afternoon I met Miliukov. He confirmed that the deputies of the "Progressive Bloc"\* have come back exasperated with the Government: they accuse it of provoking the economic crisis in order to make the continuation of the war impossible. The "Cadet" party has been secretly discussing the possibility of organizing a violent demonstration against Sturmer and Protopopov. It is improbable that there will be anything more than speeches.

I asked Miliukov:

"So in your opinion we need anticipate nothing serious from the return of the Duma?"

"No, nothing serious. But certain things will have to

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\* The "Progressive Bloc" includes all the parties of the Left except the socialists, i.e., 250 out of 402 deputies. There are 15 socialists.

be said from the tribune. Otherwise we should lose all our influence with our constituents and they would go over to the extremists."

\* \* \*

Monday, November 13, 1916.

D——, a journalist who has secret relations with the *Okhrana* and honours me with his confidences when he is "hard up," assured me to-day that Protopopov is taking active steps to reorganize the "Black Bands," the famous *Tchernia Sotny* of 1905 and 1906. His principal colleague in this task is Nicholas Feodorovitch B——.

The instrument is worthy of the job. B——, an ex-officer of cavalry who has since become the Antinous of old Prince Mestchersky (whom he recently succeeded), has been engaged in several high police missions in Russia and abroad during the last few years.

I remember dining with him and Nicholas Maklakov, who was then Minister of the Interior, at Prince Mestchersky's house on May 9, 1914. We were a party of four and I was quite anxious to know the formidable advocate of the *Gradjanin*, the renowned champion of autocratic tsarism and Divine Right. Our talk, at a table piled high with bottles, continued until after midnight. Notwithstanding the burden of his seventy-three years and the incurable disease which was already undermining his strength, Vladimir Petrovitch amused me greatly with his disdainful and biting wit, his flashes of rage and pride, his grim prophecies, the splendid fury of his cursings and revilings and all the riotous, explosive and inflammable eloquence which reminded me of the eruption of a volcano. Every prophecy and aphorism which fell from his lips brought a cry of admiration from Maklakov. B—— kept his eyes fixed on the ceiling in a kind of ecstasy, but from time to time I caught him switching on me a sidelong, but piercing, enquiring and crafty glance, the glance of spy or police agent.

Nicholas Feodorovitch is thus quite worthy of the mission Protopopov has entrusted to him of re-establishing the powerful instrument of reaction which General Bogdano-

vitch and Doctor Dubrovin created in 1905. It was that "Union of the Russian People" which gained so atrocious a reputation through the exploits of its "Black Bands." The idea of mobilizing the rural masses in the name of orthodox autocracy and inciting them against the liberals and intellectuals, subject races and Jews, is being considered every day by those in the entourage of the Minister of the Interior. In addition to B—— who is a go-between and adviser rather than a man of action, the effective direction of the movement is said to be in the hands of three former leaders of the *Tchernia Sotny*, Markov, Bulavtsel and Zamyslovsky. It is thought that a few well arranged pogroms would be enough to revive the "old popular virtues." Under the ægis of this national reawakening, the Duma would be dissolved, or rather that baneful institution, the source of all evil, would be suppressed once and for all.

Thus the party's doctrine and programme have not changed since that day in 1907 when Doctor Dubrovin sent the following telegram to the Emperor to congratulate him on having dissolved the second Duma :

*Tears of joy prevent us from giving utterance to the thoughts that have crowded in upon us on reading your manifesto, oh beloved Sovereign, and on hearing your imperious words which have put an end to the criminal existence of the Duma. We fervently implore the Most High to give you the strength and firmness required to complete your holy task. Russia has nothing to fear from her enemies at home and abroad so long as the Russian people is defended by its Tsar autocrat, God's envoy on earth.*

\* \* \*

Tuesday, November 14, 1916.

This morning Neratov communicated to me officially the speech the Government is to read to the Council of Empire and the Duma on the opening of the session this afternoon.

It is couched in appropriate terms. The Government reaffirms that to Russia Constantinople is a war-aim of such vital importance that the Russian people must leave

nothing undone to attain it. As regards Poland, the speech repeats that the Emperor is firm in his resolve to reunite the territories of Poland in an autonomous kingdom.

But at the last moment the ministers, who have heard of the hostility the Duma proposes to show them, have decided to omit the speech and leave the Chamber immediately after the opening speech of President Rodzianko. Sturmer has also requested the ambassadors to leave the diplomatic gallery at the moment when the ministers withdraw.

When I arrived at the Tauride Palace at two o'clock, I discussed with my English, Italian and American colleagues the strange request Sturmer has just made to us. Buchanan, who is our *doyen*, pointed out that if we remained in our places after the ministers left and some parliamentary incident, or demonstration damaging to the Government, took place, our position might well become awkward. We came round to his opinion.

After a short patriotic harangue by Rodzianko, all the ministers rose, to the general stupefaction. They then slowly left the chamber, Sturmer leading, leaving behind them a great hubbub, above which the yells of the socialists could be heard.

We left the diplomatic gallery, after explaining to those around us that we were doing so in deference to a request from the President of the Council. As we passed out we were cheered.

From the Tauride Palace we went to the Marie Palace where the Council of Empire met at four o'clock. We confined ourselves to hearing the President's speech and stayed no longer, as we did not wish to hurt the feelings of the Duma.

But outside the chamber itself several members of the Council invited us to tea in the *salons*. Stakhovitch, General Polivanov, Sigismond Wielopolski, Vladimir Gourko and Krivoshein, who are among the wisest and most liberal-minded members of the upper chamber, are very grieved at the Government's attitude towards the Duma. General Polivanov said to me:

"This war cannot be brought to a successful conclusion

without the active and willing help of the Duma, so it's sheer madness to presume to govern without it. As for governing in defiance of it, I can't believe anyone's thinking of it; it would be the climax of insanity."

There is great rejoicing in the camp of reaction. I have overheard remarks such as the following: "How can the rage and opposition of the Duma hamper the Government in any way? The Duma can only storm. Let it storm, to its heart's content!"

After the ministers left, the sitting continued at the Tauride Palace. Schildlovsky, the leader of the "progressive block," and Miliukov, the leader of the "cadets," made very grave charges against the Government.

Miliukov formally accused Sturmer of treason and double-dealing. In support of his charge of treason he referred to the provocative rôle of the police in the strikes in munitions factories, the secret communications with Germany, Protopopov's talk with the German agent, Warburg, at Stockholm, and so on. As regards the double-dealing, he cited the Manuilov affair. He wound up as follows: "If I am asked why I open such a discussion during the war, I reply that it is because M. Sturmer's ministry is itself a peril during the war, and a danger to the prosecution of the war. We must therefore fight on until we have ministers worthy of our confidence."

The pressure of the Austro-Germans on Rumania is increasing steadily. In the valleys of the Jiul and the Oltu the Rumanians are retreating. On the other hand, in Macedonia the Franco-Serbian troops are advancing in the bend of the Cerna and the plain of Monastir.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, November 15, 1916.*

I have been shown a letter which Prince Lvov, president of the Union of Zemstvos, has just written to Rodzianko to enlighten the Duma on the dangers of the policy which the Imperial Government has adopted. It includes the following phrases:

*The situation at home is growing worse every day. The*



*meaningless and inconsistent actions of the Government have increased the general disorganization of the State. The nation is getting exasperated and indignant. The continual changes of ministers have paralysed authority. But that is not all. A horrible suspicion, rumours of treason and scandalous stories have propagated a belief that the hand of the enemy is at work in our public affairs. This belief is strengthened by the persistent reports to the effect that the Government has already decided to conclude a separate peace. The delegates of the Union of Zemstvos indignantly denounce the idea of a shameful peace; they consider that patriotism and honour compel Russia to continue the war at the side of her allies until victory is achieved. They firmly believe in the triumph of our heroic army but they are obliged to admit that the main danger is not from without but from within. They are therefore determined to support the Duma in its efforts to set up a government capable of making all the resources of the country available. Great Russia will give all the help in her power to the government of the people.*

This letter has been passing from hand to hand and has been the cause of excited comment in the lobbies of the Tauride Palace.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, November 16, 1916.*

The press has been forbidden by the censorship to reproduce or comment on Miliukov's attack on Sturmer the day before yesterday. But it is being circulated among the public, and the effect is all the greater because everyone is improving upon it by exaggerating the phraseology or adding revelations of his own.

In the Duma the speech has had a curious result. The "Progressive Bloc" has been split by the action of the advanced elements who regard Miliukov's intervention as too timid and platonic and insist upon an open fight against the Government.

On the other hand a letter is being secretly hawked round which the leader of the "Octobrists," Gutchkov, recently wrote to General Alexeiev, pointing out the

“ mortal peril ” to which Russia is exposed by the policy of Sturmer. The letter ends thus :

*The nation and the army are at one in believing that if M. Sturmer has not already committed treason, he is quite prepared to do so. Is it not terrible to think that all the secrets of our diplomacy are in that man's hands? The infamous policy of which he is the instrument is likely to cost us all the fruits of our military effort. Forgive me for sending this letter, but I felt I must write to you, as if anyone can remedy the evil it is you alone.*

\* \* \*

*Friday, November 17, 1916.*

Last night the Council of Ministers had a long discussion on a project of Sturmer's for dissolving the Duma and arresting Miliukov. Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, was the only minister to agree with this scheme.

According to a secret report which comes indirectly from Trepov, the position of Sturmer and Protopopov has become impossible, as the Emperor is absolutely determined that there shall be no conflict between the Government and the Duma. Trepov is expecting to succeed Sturmer very shortly. As his ardent patriotism in no way affects his dynastic loyalty, he cannot, of course, approve of the aggressive attitude which the Duma has recently adopted ; he will be very firm in his dealings with that body.

This afternoon the sitting of the Duma was marked by a curious incident which has created a sensation.

Since the first sitting after the reopening, none of the ministers had entered the Tauride Palace. Great was the astonishment of the Assembly, therefore, when General Shuvaïev, the War Minister, and Admiral Grigorovitch, Naval Minister, were seen to come in about two o'clock. They immediately asked to speak and announced that they were anxious to work wholeheartedly with the Duma to prosecute the war to complete victory. This unexpected pronouncement was greeted with frantic cheers. The two ministers then proceeded at once to the Armaments Committee

It has been a heavy blow for Sturmer. The idea originated with Admiral Grigorovitch, but it was only with the help of General Alexeiev that he managed to win over his colleague at the War Ministry.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, November 18, 1916.*

Of the symptoms which have impelled me to a very gloomy diagnosis of the moral health of the Russian people, one of the most alarming is the steady increase in the number of suicides in recent years.

As this question has caused me serious concern, I have discussed it with Dr. Shingarev, a Duma deputy and neurologist, who came to see me on a private matter. He tells me that the number of suicides has trebled or even quadrupled in Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov and Odessa during the last ten years. The evil has spread to the country districts also, though it has not reached such high proportions there or made such rapid progress. It is the youth of the country which is paying the heaviest tribute. Two-thirds of the victims are under twenty-five and the statistics record cases of children of eight. The causes of most of these crimes are neurasthenia, melancholia, hypochondria and general disgust with life. Cases due to impulsive obsession or physical suffering are rare. As always in Russia, mental contagion and mutual suggestion play an important part. Thus epidemics of suicide are frequent among students, soldiers, prisoners and prostitutes.

When a society is firmly held together and all its political, civil and religious organs are well adapted to their functions, the figure of suicides remains infinitesimal. Putting aside pathological accidents, exceptional circumstances are required to make an individual try to escape from his social group, so long as he finds it his natural atmosphere and feels himself in harmony and communion with his fellows. Thus the immense increase in the number of suicides shows that the silent forces of disintegration are at work in the heart of Russian society.

*Sunday, November 19, 1916.*

During recent months the Emperor has frequently suffered from nervous maladies which betray themselves in unhealthy excitement, anxiety, loss of appetite, depression and insomnia.

The Empress would not rest until he had consulted the quack Badmaïev, an ingenious disciple of the Mongol sorcerers. The charlatan soon discovered in his pharmacopœia the remedy appropriate to the case of his august patient: it is an elixir compounded of "Tibetan herbs" according to a magic formula and has to be prescribed very strictly.

Every time that the Tsar has used this drug, his baneful symptoms have vanished in a twinkling. He has not only recovered sleep and appetite, but experienced a general feeling of well-being, a delightful sense of increased vigour and a curious euphoria.

Judging by its effects, the elixir must be a mixture of henbane and hashish, and the Emperor should be careful not to take too much.

\* \* \*

*Monday, November 20, 1916.*

The stubborn offensive on which the Salonica army has been engaged for nearly a month in the valley of the Cerna has at length broken the resistance of the Bulgarians.

The Serbians occupied Monastir yesterday; it was the anniversary of their entry into the town in 1912.

The Emperor Francis Joseph is dying.

Sturmer has been sent for by the Tsar and left for Mohilev this evening.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, November 21, 1916.*

The practice of the occult sciences has always been popular among Russians; since the days of Swedenborg and Baroness de Krudener, all spiritualists and *illuminati*, mesmerists, fortune-tellers and high-priests of mysticism

and magic have found a sympathetic welcome on the banks of the Neva.

In 1900 the magician Papus (his real name was Dr. Encausse) who revived alchemy in France, came to St. Petersburg and soon made an enthusiastic *clientèle* for himself. In the years following he was seen there on several occasions during the residence of his great friend, the magician Philippe of Lyons; the Emperor and Empress honoured him with their whole confidence. His last visit was in February, 1906.

Newspapers which have recently reached us from France via the Scandinavian countries report that Papus died on the 26th October.

I confess that I had not given the news a moment's thought, but I am told that those who used to know the "Spiritual Master," as his fervent disciples used to call him, are in consternation.

Madame R—, who is both a professing spiritualist and a disciple of Rasputin, has been explaining this consternation to me by reference to a strange prophecy which is worth recording: the death of Papus presages nothing less than the downfall of tsarism in the near future. This is how it comes about:

At the beginning of October, 1905, Papus was sent to St. Petersburg by some of his highly-placed followers who badly needed his guidance in the formidable crisis through which Russia was then passing. The disasters in Manchuria had produced revolutionary agitation in every part of the Empire, bloody strikes, outbreaks of looting, massacre and arson. The Emperor was living in a state of torturing anxiety, finding himself unable to make his choice among the contradictory and agitated pieces of advice with which his family, ministers, dignitaries, generals and the whole court pestered him daily. Some said that he had no right to abandon traditional autocracy, and exhorted him not to shrink from the necessary severities of a ruthless reaction. Others adjured him to yield to the exigencies of modern times and introduce a constitutional *régime* in all good faith.

The very day on which Papus arrived in St. Petersburg,

a riot spread terror in Moscow and a mysterious syndicate proclaimed a general railway strike.

The magician was immediately summoned to Tsarskoïe-Selo. After a summary talk with the Emperor and Empress, a great spiritualistic *séance* was arranged for the next day. Apart from the sovereigns there was only one spectator of this secret ceremony, Captain Mandryka, a young A.D.C. of His Majesty who is now a major-general and governor of Tiflis. By an intense concentration of will and a prodigious expenditure of fluid dynamism, the "Spiritual Master" succeeded in calling up the spirit of the most pious Tsar Alexander III; the presence of the invisible spectre was attested by signs indubitable.

In spite of the fear which clutched at his heart, Nicholas II bluntly asked his father whether he should or should not resist the current of liberalism which was threatening to overwhelm Russia. The spirit replied :

*"At any cost you must crush the revolution now beginning ; but it will spring up again one day and its violence will be proportionate to the severity with which it is put down to-day. But what does it matter ! Be brave, my son ! Do not give up the struggle !"*

While the horrified sovereigns were reflecting on this appalling prophecy, Papus told them that his magic powers enabled him to avert the threatened catastrophe, but that the efficacy of his spells would cease the moment he himself ceased to be "on the physical plane." Then he solemnly performed the necessary rites.

Now the magician Papus has ceased to be "on the physical plane" since the 27th October last ; the efficacy of his spells has been destroyed, so revolution is at hand.

After leaving Madame R——, I returned to the embassy and opened my *Odyssey* at Canto IX, the famous episode of the *Nekuia*. Under the influence of the story I had just heard, that magnificent scene of primitive humanity, a gloomy and barbarous phantasmagoria, seemed to me as natural and true to life as if it had taken place yesterday. I saw Ulysses in the misty land of the Cimmerians

offering a sacrifice to the dead, digging a hole with his sword, pouring out libations of wine and milk and slaughtering a black ram on the edge of the cavity. The multitude of shades, rising up from Erebus, crowd round to drink the streaming blood. But the King of Ithaca roughly drives them off, for the only spirit he wishes to see is that of his mother, the venerable Anticlea, that she may tell him the future through the medium of the soothsayer Tiresias.

I have been reflecting that only thirty centuries lie between Ulysses and Nicholas II, Tiresias the soothsayer and Papus the magician.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, November 22, 1916.*

Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria, Apostolic King of Hungary, King of Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Esclavonia, Illyria and Galicia, King of Jerusalem, etc., died yesterday in his eighty-seventh year.

The fact is barely mentioned, and only as an unimportant incident, the reality being so much beyond all the consequences we foretold in the old days when we used to speculate on the results of the aged Emperor's disappearance!

I have no time to write his funeral oration; but to judge his reign I have only to recall the terrible words of his predecessor Ferdinand I, who was compelled to abdicate in 1848 and lived in retirement at Prague until 1875. Shortly after Sadowa the old and throneless sovereign, calling to mind the defeats of 1859 and the loss of Lombardy, and seeing Austria finally excluded from Germany and obliged to cede Venetia, burst out:

"Why was I got rid of in 1848! I should have been just as capable as my nephew of losing battles and provinces!"





## CHAPTER IV

NOVEMBER 23—DECEMBER 24, 1916.

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Sturmer's dismissal; the Empress's irritation.—Trepov is appointed President of the Council; the appointment a guarantee for the Alliance.—General Alexsiev is replaced by General Gourko for reasons of health.—Conflict between the Duma and the Minister of the Interior; fierce attacks on the "occult forces which are ruining Russia."—"Public opinion loses interest" in Constantinople and the oriental dream.—The massacre of French sailors at Constantinople.—Consideration of the measures to be taken to deal with Greece.—The Empress's *camarilla*. Who are its real leaders? Germany invites the United States to open negotiations for peace; the motive which inspires this step.—Pokrovski, the Comptroller-General of the Empire, is appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs. His first meeting with the Duma; the patriotic fervour of his speeches. I discuss with him the situation arising out of the German proposal.—Position of the allied armies in Rumania; the transport difficulty.—With a view to the reply to the German proposals, the French Government defines the "higher war aim" which the Allies have taken as the goal of their common effort: the reorganization of Europe on the principle of nationality, the rights of the nations to unhampered economic development, etc. Gokrovski accepts every article of this programme.—The Emperor prohibits the use of German terms in the nomenclature of official titles.

*Thursday, November 23, 1916.*

As I was working alone in my room about ten o'clock this evening, one of my most reliable informers handed me a note which ran thus:

*I do not want to wait until to-morrow to give your Excellency a great piece of news: M. Sturmer has resigned, and his place as President of the Council has been taken by M. Trepov.*

I am delighted with the news, though it does not surprise me. By getting rid of Sturmer, the Emperor proves once again that he is capable of the wisest decisions when he is not under the influence of the Empress.

The Austro-Germans captured Craïova yesterday.

*Friday, November 24, 1916.*

Sturmer's retirement is officially published this morning. Trepov takes his place as President of the Council; the new Minister for Foreign Affairs has not yet been appointed.

From the point of view of the war, which must take precedence of any other aspect, the selection of Trepov is a great relief to me. In the first place, Trepov has the merit of loathing Germany. His presence at the head of the Government is a guarantee that there will be no wavering in Russia's loyalty to the Alliance and that German intrigues will not continue with the same freedom as before. Moreover, he is active, intelligent and methodical; his influence on the various public services can only be excellent.

Another piece of news: General Alexeïev is going on leave. While he is away, his post is being taken over by General Vassili Josiffovitch Gourko, son of the field-marshal who was the hero of the Balkans.

The reason for General Alexeïev's retirement is his health. It is quite true that the General is suffering from an internal malady which makes an operation in the near future essential. But there is also a political reason; the Emperor considers that the Chief of the General Staff committed himself too openly against Sturmer and Protopopov.

Will General Alexeïev ever return to the *Stavka*? I cannot say. If his departure is final, I shall not be very sorry. No doubt he has won the respect of everyone by his patriotism, energy, scrupulous honesty and extraordinary capacity for work. But unfortunately he is lacking in other qualities which are not less necessary—broad views, a high conception of the Alliance, the power of visualizing all the theatres of war synthetically and as a whole. He has rigidly confined himself to his duties as *Chief of Staff to the High Command of the Russian Armies*. The fact is that it was for the Emperor himself to play the great part the importance of which General Alexeïev has never properly grasped; but the Emperor's failure to realize it has been even more complete, especially

since the time when Sturmer became his sole interpreter of the common interests of the Alliance.

General Gourko, who takes his place, is active and brilliant and has an open mind ; but it is said that he is somewhat irresponsible and lacks authority.

I was dining with some friends at the Café de Paris this evening. Sturmer's downfall was a subject of gleeful comment by all the guests who have great faith in Trepov and are already counting on a vigorous and immediate revival of the national conscience. Besak alone said nothing. He was plied with questions and answered in his usual vein of sarcasm :

"Henceforth, nothing will stop the victorious advance of our armies ! On Xmas Day we shall enter Constantinople ! In three months we shall be in Berlin ! It's the idea of Constantinople that I like best ; between ourselves, we were rather forgetting Peter the Great's will and Santa Sophia, etc."

When dinner was over, I took Besak in my car to call on a friend of mine who has a house on the Admiralty Canal. I asked him :

"Seriously, what do you think of Sturmer's dismissal ? "

He thought a minute, and then said in grave tones :

"M. Sturmer is a *great citizen*, who has tried to stop his country from proceeding down the fatal slope to which criminal folly has brought her, a slope which can only lead to defeat, shame, ruin and revolution."

"Really ; so you're a pessimist too ? "

"We're lost, Ambassador ! "

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*Saturday, November 25, 1916.*

Sturmer's dismissal was decided upon without the knowledge of the Empress ; she knew of it at the same time as he received notice himself.

She was beside herself with rage and has left at once for Mohilev, taking her daughters with her, her object being

at any rate to save Protopopov, who has joined her train.

Protopopov's retention of the post of Minister of the Interior would cause a conflict in the Duma which would be particularly dangerous because the new President of the Council, Trepov, is not the man for tactful compromises.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, November 26, 1916.*

For several days there has been much excitement in the councils of the "Cadets."

The leaders of the party, Trekrassov, Miliukov, Shingarev, Konovalov and others, are saying that the time may have come, not to overthrow the imperial *régime* of course, but to arrange some striking demonstration which would frighten the Tsar and at last compel him to discard his autocratic prerogatives and establish free government.

That was the very spirit which inspired the members of the "Monarchical Opposition" in France towards the end of 1847. We know where the ingenious "banquet" campaign ultimately took them to.

\* \* \*

*Monday, November 27, 1916.*

I forget who it was said of Cæsar that he had "all the vices and not one fault." Nicholas II has not a single vice, but he has the worst fault an autocratic sovereign could possibly have—a want of personality. He is always following the lead of others. His wishes are always being evaded, surprised or over-ridden; it never makes itself felt by any direct and spontaneous action. In this respect he in many ways resembles Louis XV, whom the consciousness of his innate weakness of character always kept in constant fear of subjection to others. Hence the love of subterfuge, which is a characteristic of both of them.

*Tuesday, November 28, 1916.*

I had some thirty guests to dinner this evening. Conversation was slow to kindle and quickly died out. The tone of the voices was dull and the very air we breathed seemed oppressive. The explanation was that the news from all quarters is bad. To begin with, there are rumours of strikes in the city and the daily rise in the cost of food has produced scenes of violence in the markets. Then the German-Bulgarian pincers are closing round Bucharest; the Danube has been crossed at Limnizza and Giurgevo; the line of the Oltu has been forced; Kimpolung and Pitesti are in the enemy's hands; the royal government has hastily fled to Jassy.

True to the Russian character of swiftly losing heart, always anticipating the worst, and so to speak meeting the decrees of fate half way, my guests were already foretelling the arrival of the Austro-Germans at the Pruth, the loss of Bessarabia and Podolia and the capture of Kiev and Odessa. I did what I could to combat these sinister prognostications which paralyse the spirit of resistance beforehand, by excluding *a priori* the possibility of success and pronouncing something to be impossible which is only uncertain. I developed the argument supplied me by a fine thought from La Rochefoucauld: "We should always have enough means if we had enough will, and when we think that things are impossible, it is often because we want to find excuses for ourselves."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, November 29, 1916.*

Trepov, who certainly cannot be suspected of either fearing or humouring the Duma, has recognized the impossibility of governing with Protopopov who is betraying signs of mental disorder which become more obvious every day.

When he was received by the Emperor at Mohilev the day before yesterday, he begged him to appoint another Minister of the Interior, reminding His Majesty that he had made the dismissal of Protopopov an indispensable

condition of his accepting the presidency of the Council. But the Empress, who is still at the imperial headquarters and keeping a sharp look-out, had anticipated the step. The Emperor, duly prompted, answered Trepov that he counted on his loyalty to help Protopopov in his task. Trepov firmly but respectfully repeated his appeal, but the Emperor was not to be shaken.

"In that case," continued Trepov, "there is nothing for me but to ask Your Majesty to accept my resignation. My conscience does not allow me to assume the responsibilities of power while M. Protopopov retains the portfolio of the Interior."

After a moment's hesitation, the Emperor replied in an imperious tone :

"Alexander Feodorovitch, I order you to carry out your duties with the colleagues I have thought fit to give you."

Trepov went out, choking down his anger.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, November 30, 1916.*

At my suggestion, Trepov has been made *Grand' croix* of the Legion of Honour. I went straight to his house to give him the news.

"The Government of the Republic," I said, "wished this to be some recognition of the signal service you rendered the Alliance in carrying through the construction of the Murman railway with such energy ; it also wants to give you a token of its confidence in you in the trying circumstances under which you take power."

Trepov was very much touched. I think he was sincere, as he always liked France, where he has spent much of his life.

Then we talked business.

Without going into the details of his differences with the Emperor and the obstacles which the Duma puts in his way, he told me that he is going to the Tauride Palace the day after to-morrow and will at once make a speech. The main points on which he will touch are the following : (1) war to the bitter end ; Russia will shrink from no

sacrifice ; (2) a pronouncement on the subject of Constantinople and the Straits ; promise to safeguard the interests of Rumania ; (3) confirmation that Poland will be restored within her ethnical frontiers to form an autonomous state ; (4) a solemn invitation to the Duma to collaborate with the Government in bringing the war to a successful conclusion.

Trepov added :

" I hope the Duma will give me a decent reception. But I'm not certain . . . You can guess why, and on whose account."

Then he told me that the Duma is absolutely determined to have nothing to do with Protopopov, and to boo him and break up the sitting if he enters the chamber. I asked him :

" How is it that the Emperor, after being wise enough to get rid of M. Sturmer, does not realize that M. Protopopov's retention of office is becoming a public and national danger ? "

" The Emperor is too sensible not to be aware of the fact. But it's the Empress who would have to be convinced. And she's absolutely uncompromising on the point ! "

After a short silence, he continued in low tones, as if he were talking to himself :

" It's a decisive moment for Russia. At the rate we are going, the German party will soon be in control, and *that* means disaster, revolution and disgrace ! We must put an end to all these intrigues, *once and for all !* In the hearing of Russia, or rather the whole world, the Government *must* utter irrevocable words which will bind all future governments. When the Duma meets the day after to-morrow, the Government will commit itself beyond recall to continue the war until Germany is crushed ; it will burn all its boats."

" What a great relief it is to hear you talk like that ! "

\* \* \*

*Friday, December 1, 1916.*

Sturmer was so terribly humiliated by his fall that he



left the Ministry for Foreign Affairs without saying good-bye to the allied ambassadors or even leaving a card. It is a significant lapse from good manners on the part of a man who is usually so ceremonious and such a slave to tradition.

\* \* \*

As I was driving along the Moïka in my car this afternoon, I saw him opposite the imperial stables. He was stumbling along against the wind and snow, his back bent, his eyes fixed on the ground and his face gloomy and grief-stricken. He did not see me. He did not see anything. As he left the pavement to cross the road, he nearly fell !

\* \* \*

*Saturday, December 2, 1916.*

I was present at the sitting of the Duma this afternoon.

The storm burst the moment the ministers appeared in the doorway and Protopopov was seen in their ranks.

Trepov ascended the tribune to read the Government programme. The deputies shouted "Down with the Ministers ! Down with Protopopov !"

Quite unperturbed, and proudly facing his audience, Trepov began to read. Three times in succession the yells from the Extreme Left compelled him to leave the tribune, but at length he was allowed to speak.

The speech was the same as he outlined to me the day before yesterday. The passage in which the Government affirmed its determination to continue the war was vociferously cheered, but the phrases referring to Constantinople left the Assembly cold, a coldness compounded of indifference and surprise.

When Trepov had finished, the sitting was suspended. The deputies poured out into the corridors. I returned to the embassy.

This evening I was told that the resumption of the sitting had been marked by two unexpected and violent speeches

by the two leaders of the Right, Count Vladimir Bobrinski and Purishkevitch. To the intense amazement of their political brethren, they fulminated against the "occult forces which are dishonouring and ruining Russia." Purishkevitch actually said that "it only requires the recommendation of Rasputin to raise the most abject creatures to the highest offices. To-day, Rasputin is more dangerous than the false Dimitri in days of old. Up, you Ministers ! If you are true patriots, go to the Stavka ; fall at the Tsar's feet and have the courage to tell him that the crisis at home cannot continue, the multitude is muttering in its wrath, revolution threatens, and an obscure *moujik* shall govern Russia no longer ! "

\* \* \*

*Sunday, December 3, 1916.*

Trepov's position is very delicate. On the one hand, he realizes the impossibility of governing, or rather of loyally supporting the Alliance, while the direction of public opinion and the police remains in Protopopov's hands. On the other hand, he is firmly attached to the legal constitution of the Empire and denies the right of the Duma to interfere with the exercise of the sovereign prerogatives, of which one of the most important is incontestably the selection of ministers.

Thus the conflict between the Government and the Duma means that we have more than one awkward incident ahead of us.

Yesterday and the day before, Athens was the scene of grave events.

As the Greek Government refused to surrender the war material demanded by the Allies, a detachment of French marines landed at the Piræus and marched to Athens. The Greek troops opened fire on our men and killed a large number of them. The next step was for the principal adherents of Venizelos to be massacred and their houses looted.

*Monday, December 4, 1916.*

The passage in the ministerial speech referring to Constantinople has fallen as flat among the public as it did in the Duma. There is the same phenomenon of indifference plus amazement, as if Trepov had exhumed an ancient Utopia, once fancied, but long since forgotten.

Several months ago I was already observing the progressive disappearance of the Byzantine dream. The charm has been broken.

How Russian it is to surrender one's hopes, to abandon the very thing one has longed and striven for most ardently, and even to experience a kind of bitter-sweet delight in admitting one's failure and disillusionment!

Madame P—— said to me this evening:

"The Government's pronouncement is ridiculous. Everyone has stopped thinking about Constantinople. It was a fine craze, but a sheer craze for all that. And when you're cured of a craze you don't start it again; you find another. Trepov and all the rest who are trying to bring the Russian nation back to the vision of Constantinople remind me of men who think they can reawaken the love of a woman by suggesting that they shall revive old memories together. It's no good recalling how delightful it was in Venice, in a gondola by moonlight; she will not even listen. When it's over, it's over."

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, December 5, 1916.*

The detachment of French troops has had to evacuate Athens, where the germanophile party is the ascendant.

To deal with Greece, Briand is proposing that the Allies shall take the following steps: (1) blockade of the kingdom; (2) deposition of King Constantine; (3) recognition of Venizelos.

But he specifies that there can be no question either of declaring war on Greece or attacking her monarchical constitution.

As Sturmer's successor at the Ministry for Foreign

Affairs has not yet been appointed, I have been discussing the matter with Neratov who is *pro tem.* in charge.

Like Briand, he thinks that the King's personal responsibility is seriously involved by the attack on our troops. But he objects to the deposition of the monarch :

"It would be taken very badly," he said, "by conservative circles here. The pro-German gang and the Empress's *camarilla* would not fail to use it as a weapon against the policy of the Alliance with the democratic governments of the West."

From the practical point of view, Neratov is impressed by the difficulties of the enterprise and the dangerous consequences it would involve.

By virtue of what principle would the deposition of the King be pronounced ? By what means could hands be laid on Constantine ? If he fled to Larissa or Trikala, would we go after him ? To whom would the crown be transferred ? To the Crown Prince ? Suppose the latter refused to participate in the dethronement of his father ? In any case, should we not find ourselves drawn into a great display of military force, and perhaps an actual conquest of Greece ? If so, would not the Salonica army be reduced to impotence ?

Neratov prefers a more prudent and less risky solution. In his view, the Allied Governments should defer settling their account with King Constantine. For the moment all that is required is that (1) the Piræus should be occupied ; (2) the principal ports of the kingdom should be subjected to a strict blockade ; (3) strategic dispositions should be taken in Thessaly in order to protect the left flank of the Army of the East. These conclusions seem to me the very essence of wisdom.

\* \* \*

Thursday, December 7, 1916.

Yesterday, the Austro-Germans and Bulgarians entered Bucharest.

Hindenburg's strategic genius has brought about his masterpiece.

*Saturday, December 9, 1916.*

The cry of alarm, to which Count Bobrinsky and Purishkevitch, the two champions of naked tsarism, recently gave utterance in the Duma has had its echo in that archaic citadel of monarchical absolutism, the Council of Empire.\*

\* \* \*

This high assembly has to-day plucked up courage to express a wish in the matter of general policy, warning the Emperor against the evil action of occult influences. This bold stroke—and how timorous it is!—is provoking lively comment.

History is nothing but a long succession of fresh beginnings. In March, 1830, the *Chambre des Pairs* took the same course when it respectfully proffered Charles X a piece of wise advice. But has anyone ever profited by the lessons of history?

\* \* \*

*Sunday, December 10, 1916.*

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the action of Russia is inspired by the Empress's *camarilla*. But by whom is this *camarilla* itself inspired? From whom does it get its programme and leadership?

Certainly not the Empress. The public, which likes simple ideas and clear-cut types, has got a wrong idea of the part played by the Tsarina; it materially exaggerates and contorts it. Alexandra Feodorovna is too impulsive, wrong-headed and unbalanced to imagine a political system and carry it out logically. She is the omnipotent political tool of the conspiracy I am always sensing about me; but she is nothing more than a tool.

So with the individuals who flutter around her, Rasputin, the Virubova, General Voyeikov, Taneïev, Sturmer,

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\* The Council of Empire is composed of one hundred and ninety-two members, one-half of whom are appointed directly by the Emperor and the other elected by the clergy, the provincial assemblies, the nobility, the great landowners, the chambers of commerce and the universities.

Prince Andronnikov and the rest ; they are only subordinates, supers, servile plotters or marionettes. The Minister of the Interior, Protopopov, who seems made of more solid stuff, owes that illusion solely to the irritation of his meninges. Behind his expansive bravado and restless activity, there is nothing but cerebral erethism. He is a monomaniac who will soon be under restraint.

Then by whom is the Tsarskoïe-Selo *camarilla* really inspired ?

In vain have I questioned those who seemed best qualified to satisfy my curiosity. All I have got is vague or contradictory replies, hypotheses and suppositions.

But if I *had* to come to some conclusion, I should say that the evil course for which the Empress and her coterie will be responsible to History is inspired by four individuals : Stcheglovitov, the leader of the Extreme Right in the Council of Empire ; Monsignor Pitirim, the Metropolitan of Petrograd ; Bieletzky, the ex-Director of the Police Department, and the banker, Manus.

Apart from these four persons, I see nothing but the play of nameless, collective, scattered and sometimes unconscious forces, which are perhaps the sole interpreter of the traditional policy of tsarism and its instinct of self-preservation, and represents all the organic vitality and acquired momentum that remains to it.

In this quartet I assign a special position to the banker Manus : it is he who keeps it in touch with Berlin, and through him that Germany plans and fosters her intrigues among Russian society. He is the distributor of the German subsidies.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, December 13, 1916.*

Yesterday, Germany transmitted a note to the United States of America, a note in which she speaks for herself and her Allies, and declares that she is ready to open negotiations for peace here and now. This magniloquent pronouncement is not supported by the slightest hint of what the terms may be.

At first blush this note seems to be a stratagem, or trap, calculated to provoke a pacifist movement in the hostile camp and to disintegrate our coalition. If Germany will first inform us what are her plans, what reparations she is prepared to make, and what guarantee she offers us, we shall take her proposals seriously.

I have just had a visit from Buchanan and Carlotti, as I am kept in bed by a very severe attack of rheumatism. We all think alike.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, December 14, 1916.*

The Emperor has entrusted the portfolio of Foreign Affairs to the Comptroller-General of the Empire, Nicholas Nicolaïevitch Pokrovski.

It is an unexpected choice. Pokrovski is sixty and has devoted all his life to questions of finance and public accounts; he has no idea of foreign problems and diplomacy. But, subject to that reservation—which is important at the present moment—I am not dissatisfied with the appointment. In the first place he is sensible, clever, hard-working and thoroughly devoted to the idea of the Alliance. As a man, he is of quite uncommon quality, warm-hearted and modest, with a touch of gay cynicism. He is not well off, has a large family and leads an extremely simple and upright life. During the thirty-five years in which he has been employed in the financial administration of the Empire, not a breath of suspicion has ever rested upon him.

\* \* \*

*Friday, December 15, 1916.*

By way of inaugurating his term of office, Pokrovski made a speech to the Duma to-day in which he showed up the illusory and insidious character of the German proposal in the firmest language. "The Entente Powers," he said, "proclaim their unwavering determination to continue

the war until final victory. Our countless sacrifices would be rendered of no purpose by a premature peace with an enemy who is exhausted, but not yet overthrown."

These words, which are in such happy contrast to the ambiguous and tricky phraseology of Sturmer, have made a great impression on the Duma ; the important thing is that they were uttered to destroy the effect of the German initiative.

As I am still confined to bed, I have not been without visitors. I hear the same observation from all quarters : " We have got one very important result already—that the peace question has now been brought to the attention of public opinion everywhere ! Men's minds are thus being gradually prepared for a reasonable outcome."

\* \* \*

*Saturday, December 16, 1916.*

Pokrovski called on me this afternoon. I congratulated him on the firm and frank statements he made in the Duma yesterday.

" In every detail," he replied, " I carried out the orders of His Majesty, with whose ideas I have the good fortune to find myself in perfect agreement. His Majesty is determined that there shall be no further doubt about his intentions, which are well known to you ; on that point he has given me the most categorical instructions. Why, he has asked me to lose no time in submitting a draft manifesto, informing the army that Germany is asking for peace."

We then discussed the proper reply to be made to the note of the Teutonic coalition. Although he has not come to any definite conclusion on the subject, Pokrovski thinks that the military situation (or " the war map," as the Germans call it) does not yet enable us to formulate our intentions and that it would be prudent for us to confine ourselves to general expressions, such as " material and moral reparations," " political and economic guarantees."



*Monday, December 18, 1916.*

B——, who is keeping a pretty close watch on the labour movement, tells me of a growing tendency among the leaders of the socialist groups to cut loose from the Duma and organize their plan of action on other than legal lines. Cheidze and Kerensky are always saying: "The Cadets don't know anything about the proletariat. They are no use to us!"

At the moment these leaders are directing their main propaganda at the army, insisting that it is its interest to throw in its lot with the workmen in order to secure for the peasants—of which it is the direct emanation—the triumph of their agrarian claims. So the barracks are being flooded with pamphlets on the classic themes: "The land belongs to the agricultural workers. It is theirs in full right, and therefore without purchase; no one buys back something of which he has been robbed. The revolution alone can bring about this great work of social reparation."

I asked B—— if the "defeatist" doctrine of the famous Lenin, now a refugee in Geneva, is making any headway in the army:

"No," he said; "the only advocates of that doctrine here are a few lunatics who are supposed to be in the pay of Germany—or the *Okbrana*. The 'Defeatists,' or *porajentzy*, as they are called, are only a negligible minority in the social-democratic party."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, December 20, 1916.*

I have had a talk with General Polivanov who has himself had a long conversation with one of his former *aides-de-camp*, newly arrived from Jassy. The situation of the allied armies in Rumania is as follows:

(1) The Russian forces now operating on Rumanian territory comprise—six divisions in the Dobrudja, ten divisions (of which six are cavalry) in the region of the Yalomita, five divisions (one cavalry) in southern Moldavia. The army of General Leezinsky, who is under

the direct orders of General Brussilov, extends from Torna to the Bukovina; (2) the transport of troops and war material has suffered enormous delays (between four and six weeks) owing to the defective organization of the Rumanian railways; the seventeen trains per day which had been reckoned on has often been reduced to four; (3) with a view to gaining time, some of the troops are marching along the railway track, the transport of material and supplies being given a preference. But that does not prevent the concentration being a very slow business, as the distance between the Bukovina and Focsani is three hundred kilometres; (4) all that remains of the Rumanian army (about seventy thousand) is to be sent to the rear of the Russian troops in order to be re-organized in training camps. With the reserves which have not yet been mobilized on Moldavian territory, we shall probably be able to form an army of three hundred thousand men for next spring.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, December 21, 1916.*

Twice and three times a week Protopopov asks an audience of the Tsarina, with the excuse of making his report and asking her advice.

The other day, the moment he entered he fell on his knees before her and cried out :

“ Oh Majesty, I can see Christ behind you ! ”

\* \* \*

*Friday, December 22, 1916.*

Yesterday, the President of the United States suggested to the governments of all the belligerent Powers that they should make known their various views as to the terms on which the war could end. President Wilson makes it clear that he “ is not proposing peace,” that he is not even “ offering mediation, but simply suggesting ‘ soundings,’ ” so that we may know “ how far off the long-desired haven of peace may be.”

*Saturday, December 23, 1916.*

This morning I have received from Paris a draft reply to the American note.

After paying tribute to the sentiments by which President Wilson is inspired, Briand protests against the fact that the note seems to treat the two groups of belligerents on the same footing, although one alone bears the whole responsibility for the aggression. Then he defines the "higher war aims" which the Allies have made their own. These war aims involve the complete independence of Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro, with all the compensation due to them; the evacuation of the occupied territories in France, Russia and Rumania, with just reparations; the reorganization of Europe in accordance with the principle of nationality and the rights of peoples to unhampered economic development; the restitution of territories torn from the Allies by force or against the wishes of the inhabitants in times past; the liberation of the Italians, Slavs, Rumanians and Czecho-Slovaks; the emancipation of the peoples subjected to Ottoman tyranny; the exclusion of the Turks from Europe; the re-establishment of Poland in its national integrity.

An hour later I was in Pokrovski's cabinet, where I had arranged with Buchanan to meet me. I read Briand's draft to them. They listened to me with the closest attention, and the further I got the better they seemed pleased. When I had finished, they burst out together: "Splendid! It's perfect! That's the way to talk! That's what we must tell the world!"

At this point my Italian colleague arrived. Pokrovski to whom I had handed a copy of the draft, re-read it aloud, dwelling on each phrase. Carlotti warmly approved.

Before expressing his official and final opinion, Pokrovski asked me to give him time to think it over. I insisted that he ought at any rate to give me his approval in principle so that Briand could fortify himself with it in answering President Wilson. There is no doubt that it is of high importance to us not to delay our reply, so that we can frustrate the pro-German intrigues which are feverishly trying to work American opinion

"Very well! As you please!" he said. "Be good enough to cable Monsieur Briand that, speaking generally, I approve his draft and in fact admire it. But I reserve the right to suggest certain slight and purely formal amendments in the paragraphs which more particularly concern Russia, those referring to Poland and Armenia for example."

On leaving, I took Buchanan in my car. We were silent and anxious. The same thought spontaneously possessed both of us—how far we still are from seeing the realization of this splendid peace programme! After all, everything is going from bad to worse here!

We shared our latest news, which is lamentable.

The Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Towns, the great private associations which have worked so hard together since the war began to supply the army and the civil population, were to meet in congress at Moscow next week. The police have just forbidden that congress, though the two Unions represent all that is most sound, sincere and energetic in Russian society!

On the other hand, Protopopov is in the highest favour. He has sent himself off on some mission in the provinces, with a view both to avoiding contact with the Duma and preaching sound doctrine to the Governors.

A friend of mine, who has come from Moscow and called on me yesterday, told me that the public there is furious with the Empress. In drawing-rooms, shops and cafés, it is being openly said that the *Niemka*, the "German Woman," is about to ruin Russia and must be put away as a lunatic. And as to the Emperor, men do not stop at remarking that he would do well to reflect on the fate of Paul I.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, December 24, 1916.*

I will reveal one fact—trivial enough, superficially—which proves how anxious Nicholas II is to remove the many existing traces of German influence in Russia.

At the very beginning of the war, he substituted the Slav name "Petrograd" for the German name "Peters-

burg." Many a time since has he shown himself shocked and annoyed at the German words which are met with in profusion in the nomenclature of official titles and ranks. Thus "Grand Marshal of the Court," is called *Oberhofmarschall*, "Secretary of State" *Staats-sekretär*, "Chamberlain" *Kammerherr*, "Master of the Horse" *Stalmeister*, "Master of the Hunt" *Jägermeister*, "Aide-de-camp" *Flügeladjutant*, "Maid of Honour" *Freilina*. The Emperor has now made up his mind to remove all these evil-sounding names from the hierarchical lists and replace them by words drawn from the national idiom.

This linguistic task has been entrusted to Prince Michael Serguevitch Putiatin, Marshal of the Court and head of the administrative services of the Tsarskoïe-Selo palaces. It is an excellent choice. Prince Putiatin is not only an expert in history, archæology and the science of heraldry, but also belongs to one of the oldest families in Russia. In his veins he has nothing but Russian blood, dating back to the tenth century, for he is a descendant of the line of Rurik, through his ancestor Ivan Seinenovitch, voivode of Lithuania in 1430, who was himself descended from St. Vladimir, through Michael Romanovitch, Prince of Drutzk in the thirteenth century.

## CHAPTER V

DECEMBER 25, 1916—JANUARY 8, 1917



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The Emperor's manifesto to his armies; Nicholas II reaffirms his confidence in victory and announces his unwavering determination to restore Poland and gain Constantinople. I see a hidden meaning in this manifesto.—The Russian General Staff's real share of responsibility for the Rumanian disaster.—Proposal to call a conference of the Allies at Petrograd.—Personal relations between my English colleague, Sir George Buchanan, and the opposition parties: unfounded charges made against him in this matter.—Murder of Rasputin; mysterious setting of the drama. The Empress's despair. Prince Felix Yussupov, the Grand Duke Dimitri and Purishkevitch (deputy of the Extreme Right) are soon indicated as the murderers or accomplices.—Arrest of the Grand Duke Dimitri. Effect on the public of the assassination of the *staretz*. The discovery of the corpse in the Neva; it is conveyed to the Tchesma Home. Sister Akulina prepares it for burial; a letter from the Empress to the "martyr." Nocturnal obsequies at Tsarskoïe-Selo.—A conspiracy against the sovereigns; propaganda among the regiments of the Guard; the share of the Grand Dukes.—Details of the murder of Rasputin: the trap; the execution; the corpse is thrown into the Neva.—The Emperor receives me at Tsarskoïe-Selo; his anxious and absorbed appearance; the strength of his obsessions; my gloomy impression of this meeting.—The Grand Duke Dimitri is sent to Persia and Prince Felix Yussupov banished to the Government of Kursk.—Postponement of the Allied conference to be held in Petrograd.

*Monday, December 25, 1916.*

As Pokróvski informed me on the sixteenth of this month, the Emperor has to-day issued a manifesto to his military and naval forces, telling them that Germany has made an offer of peace and once more expressing his determination to continue the war until full and final victory.

*The time for peace, he says, has not yet come. The enemy has not yet been driven from the occupied territories. Russia has not yet performed the tasks this war has set her, by which I mean the possession of Constantinople and the Straits, as well as the restoration of a free Poland, composed of her three portions.*

The peroration has a pathetic and personal ring which



contrasts vividly with the colourless banality of documents of this kind :

*We remain unshaken in our confidence in victory. God will bless our arms : He will cover them with everlasting glory and give us a peace worthy of your glorious deeds. Oh, my glorious troops, a peace such that generations to come will bless your sacred memory !*

This noble and courageous language cannot fail to find an echo in the national conscience, and yet it leaves me with an uneasy feeling. The Emperor is too sensible to fail to realize that the Rumanian catastrophe has robbed him of any chance of winning Constantinople, and that his people have long since given up the Byzantine dream. Then why this high-sounding reference to a scheme, the futility of which none knows better than he ? By speaking thus, has it been his intention to reply to the current of disaffection towards him which is on the increase among the most devoted servants of the dynasty ? Or does he feel that he is lost, " abandoned of God," and has he therefore desired to summarize in a final proclamation or a kind of political will the noble motives, inspired by considerations of national dignity, which justify him in having exposed the Russian nation to the fiery trial of this war ? The latter hypothesis appeals to me strongly.

The Rumanians have not yet brought the Austro-German thrust to a standstill ; they are continuing their retreat towards the Sereth.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, December 26, 1916.*

With a view to clearing the Russian General Staff of any responsibility for the Rumanian disaster, General Gourko has just sent the following note to General Joffre :

*Rumania's entry into the field did not take place under the circumstances we should have deemed best from the point of view of the general plan of campaign. The Rumanians, ignoring the suggestions we considered most convenient for ourselves and most advantageous to them,*

*persisted in forcing upon us a division of forces and programme of operations, and jealously reserving to themselves the area which is the object of their national claims. Hence a bad distribution of the troops which has hampered all the subsequent course of events.*

*On the other hand, after a few weeks we were forced to recognize that the military value of our new ally did not come up either to our hopes or expectations. Her army's lack of training and feeble powers of resistance have upset all calculations.*

*As soon as it was possible to realize the situation, we decided to come to her help by sending her large forces, the number of which speaks eloquently enough for the importance we attached to it. But, apart from the time required for the precautions we had to take on the front from which they were drawn, their movement was delayed to an unprecedented extent by the inadequacy of the railway, an inadequacy which was aggravated by the difference of gauge.*

*On November 27, when the position in western Wallachia became threatening, we offered the Rumanian General Staff to send to Bucharest part of the forces we had concentrated on the left flank of the Ninth Army, abandoning the latter's projected offensive. But the Rumanian General Staff, basing their argument on the impossibility of supplying the rolling-stock required, refused this direct support and asked us to order the offensive of the Ninth Army across the Carpathians in the direction of Czik-Szereda.*

*From that moment the sudden collapse of the Rumanian army, when the enemy had crossed the Danube, gave us very little time. The Russian troops were not able to prevent the retreat and our generals, very much against the grain, have been compelled to give ground. The retreat had to continue until their forces were joined by other Russian troops sent to their aid. You may be certain that all steps will be taken to hasten the despatch of further reinforcements. Preparations are also being made to develop the railways so as to permit of powerful action, when adequate supplies are available. Once again I assure you that nothing will be left undone to set in motion everything which can repair the situation in Rumania.*

Wednesday, December 27, 1916.

There is to be a conference of the Allies in Petrograd towards the end of January. The representatives of the French government will be Doumergue, senator, ex-Président du Conseil and formerly Minister for Foreign Affairs, and General de Castelnau.

In view of the instructions with which our delegates will be armed, I am giving Briand my own ideas on certain subjects. After confirming that the Emperor is still determined to continue the war, I have explained that, for all that, the firmness of his intentions is not a sufficient guarantee from our point of view.

*In actual practice, the Emperor is continually at fault. Whether it is that he weakly yields to the importunities of his wife, or that he has neither the intelligence nor the strength of will to dominate his bureaucracy, the fact remains that he is always doing things, or allowing things to be done, which conflict with his policy.*

*So far as home affairs are concerned, he leaves public opinion to be led by ministers, such as M. Sturmer and M. Protopopov, who are notoriously compromised in Germany's favour, not to mention the fact that he allows a hot-bed of Teutonic intrigues to exist in his own palace. In the economic and industrial sphere, he signs everything put before him. And when an allied Government secures some promise from him which the authorities find inconvenient, it is easy game for them to get him to ratify a decision which indirectly cancels the promise.*

*From the military point of view, the Rumanian affair is typical. It is more than six months since the President of the Republic, King George and the ambassadors of France and England all told him that the drama opening on the banks of the Danube would be decisive, that it was to Russia's interest more than anyone else's to force her way to Sofia, as the conquest of Constantinople depended upon it, and so on. He promised everything he was asked, and his personal intervention stopped there!*

*His impotence, or neglect to secure the triumph of his views in the realm of action has done us enormous harm.*

*While France is pulling all her weight in the Alliance, Russia puts forth only a half or a third of the effort of which she is capable. This situation is particularly serious because the critical phase of the war has perhaps begun and the question now is whether Russia will have time to recover all she has lost before the fate of the East is decided.*

*I am therefore anxious that during the deliberations of the approaching conference the delegate of the Government of the Republic shall endeavour to make the Imperial Government adopt a very definite and detailed programme which will so to speak arm the Emperor against his weaknesses of character and the insidious action of his bureaucracy.*

*As regards the diplomatic guarantees with which I think we ought to provide ourselves in dealing with Russia, you know my opinion : I will not discuss it now.*

*From the strategic point of view, the presence of General Gourko at the head of the General Staff permits us to hope that it will be possible to agree upon a very rigid and detailed plan.*

*The presence of M. Trepov at the head of the Council will also facilitate the conclusion of a detailed agreement on matters of manufacture, transport and supply.*

\* \* \*

*Thursday, December 28, 1916.*

I have been questioned several times about Buchanan's relations with the liberal parties, and actually asked in all seriousness if he is not secretly working for a revolution.

On each occasion I have protested with all my might. In the first place, in all our daily conversations, which have been as cordial and frank as anyone could wish, I have never caught a word or a hint, however slight, which has given me ground for thinking that he is in touch with the revolutionary leaders. In any case, all I know of his character would be enough to give the lie to the rôle attributed to him. We have been friends since 1907 ; we were colleagues at Sofia for four years and passed through the dangerous crisis of Bulgarian independence together ; for the last three years we have been working side by side here : we have thus pretty well found each

other out. I say that I do not know a more upright man, or a more perfect gentleman, than Sir George Buchanan. He is the soul of honour and loyalty; he would think it an utter disgrace to intrigue against a sovereign to whose court he is accredited.

Old Prince Viazemsky, to whom I have just been talking in this strain, protested with a challenging glance :

"But if his Government has ordered him to encourage our anarchists, he is obliged to do so !"

I retorted :

"If his Government ordered him to steal a fork the next time he dines with the Emperor, do you think he would obey ?"

The charge now made against Buchanan by the reactionaries has an historical precedent. After the assassination of Paul I, it was alleged that the plot had been conceived and planned by the British Government. The legend soon gained acceptance; a few years later it was almost the official truth. It was actually embellished with certain details: the ambassador, Lord Whitworth, had personally organized the crime and bribed the participants through his mistress, the beautiful Olga Jerebtsov, a sister of one of the conspirators, Prince Plato Zubov. It was forgotten that Lord Whitworth had left Russia in April, 1800, i.e., eleven months before the tragedy.

\* \* \*

Friday, December 29, 1916.

The Union of Zemstvos and the Union of Towns, whose next congress was recently forbidden, have secretly adopted a motion. Its most striking passage runs thus :

*Our salvation lies in a deep sense of our responsibility to the country. When power becomes an obstacle in the road to victory, the whole land must shoulder the responsibility for the fate of Russia. The Government, which has become the tool of occult forces, is leading Russia to her ruin and shaking the imperial throne. We must create a government worthy of a great people at one of the gravest moments of its history. In the critical struggle upon which it has entered, may the*

*Duma come up to what the country expects of it! There is not a day to lose!*

Countess R——, who has just spent three days in Moscow ordering clothes from the famous dressmaker, Lomanova, confirms what I have recently heard about the rage of the Muscovites against the imperial family:

"I dined in different circles each evening," she said. "Everywhere one hears the same indignant outcry. If the Emperor appeared on the Red Square to-day, he would be booed. The Empress would be torn to pieces. The kind, warm-hearted and pure-minded Grand Duchess Elizabeth dare not leave her convent now. The workmen accuse her of starving the people. There seems to be a stir of revolution among all classes."

\* \* \*

*Saturday, December 30, 1916.*

About seven o'clock this evening an excellent informer, who is at my service, told me that Rasputin was murdered this morning during a supper at the Yussupov palace. The murderers are said to be young Prince Felix Yussupov (who married a niece of the Tsar in 1914), the Grand Duke Dimitri, son of the Grand Duke Paul, and Purishkevitch, leader of the Extreme Right in the Duma. Two or three society women are supposed to have been present at supper. The news is still being kept a strict secret.

Before telegraphing to Paris, I tried to obtain some confirmation of what I have just heard.

I immediately went to see Countess K——. She telephoned to Madame Golovin, a relation of hers and the great friend and protectress of Rasputin. A weeping voice replied:

"Yes, the Father disappeared last night. No one knows what's become of him. It's a horrible disaster!"

The news was circulating in the Yacht Club by the evening. The Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch refused to credit it:

"We've had Rasputin's death announced too often

before. Each time he has come back to life, and more powerful than ever ! ”

However, he telephoned to Trepov, the President of the Council, who replied :

“All I know is that Rasputin has disappeared ; I presume he has been murdered. I can't tell you any more : It's the Chief of the *Okhrana* who has the matter in hand.”

\* \* \*

Sunday, December 31, 1914.

Rasputin's corpse has not yet been found. The Empress is stricken with grief. She has begged the Emperor, who is at Mohilev, to return to her at once.

It is confirmed that the murderers are Prince Felix Yussupov, the Grand Duke Dimitri and Purishkevitch. There was no lady present at supper. If so, how was Rasputin enticed to the Yussupov palace ?

Judging by the little I know, it is the presence of Purishkevitch which gives the drama its real meaning and high political interest. The Grand Duke Dimitri is a young man about town of twenty-five, active, a fervent patriot and capable of courage in the hour of battle, but flighty and impulsive ; it seems to me he plunged blindly into this adventure. Prince Felix Yussupov is twenty-nine and gifted with quick wits and æsthetic tastes ; but his dilletantism is rather too prone to perverse imaginings and literary representations of vice and death, so I am afraid that he has regarded the murder of Rasputin mainly as a scenario worthy of his favourite author, Oscar Wilde. In any case his instincts, countenance and manner make him much closer akin to the hero of *Dorian Grey* than to Brutus or Lorenzaccio.

On the other hand, Purishkevitch, who is over fifty, is a man of doctrine and action. He has made himself the champion of orthodox absolutism ; he brings equal vehemence and skill to his advocacy of the theory of the “Tsar Autocrat, God's Emissary.” In 1905 he was the president of the famous reactionary league, the *Association of the Russian People*, and he it was who inspired and directed the terrible *pogroms* against the Jews. His

participation in the murder of Rasputin throws light on the whole attitude of the Extreme Right in the last few months; it means that the champions of autocracy, feeling themselves threatened by the Empress's madness, are determined to defend themselves in spite of the Emperor; and if necessary *against* him.

I was at the Marie Theatre this evening, where *Sleeping Beauty*, Tchaikovski's picturesque ballet, was given, with Smirnova as *première danseuse*.

Of course, the only topic of conversation was yesterday's drama, and as nothing definite is known, the Russian imagination was given free rein; Smirnova's leaps, pirouettes and "arabesques" were not more fantastic than the stories which passed from lip to lip.

During the first interval, Count Nani Mocenigo, Councillor of the Italian embassy, said to me:

"We're back in the days of the Borgias, Ambassador! Doesn't yesterday's supper remind you of the famous banquet of Sinigaglia?"

"The resemblance is but a remote one. There is not merely the difference of time; there's the difference—and a far more vital one—of civilization and character. So far as cunning and treachery are concerned, yesterday's crime is certainly not unworthy of the satanic Cæsar. But it isn't the *bellissimo inganno*, as the Valentinois called it. Magnificence in lust and villainy is not given to everyone."

\* \* \*

Monday, January 1, 1917.

If I must judge solely by the constellations of the Russian sky, the new year is beginning under bad auspices. Everywhere I see anxiety and down-heartedness. No one takes any more interest in the war, no one believes in victory any longer; the public anticipates and is resigned to the most evil happenings.

This morning I was discussing with Pokrovski the draft reply to the American note on our war aims. We tried to find a formula on the subject of Poland; I pointed out that the complete restoration of the State of Poland, involving the recovery of Posen from Prussia, is of vital



importance ; we must therefore proclaim our intentions far and wide. Pokrovski agrees in principle, but hesitates to commit himself, for fear of giving the Allies a right to meddle in the affairs of Poland. I smilingly protested :

“ You seem to be borrowing your arguments from Count Nesselrode, or Prince Gortchakov.”

He smiled in turn, and replied :

“ Give me a few days more to escape from such archaic influences.”

Then he became serious once more, and in low tones re-read the draft we had been discussing. He added in a grave voice :

“ How splendid all this is. But what a long way we are from it ! Just look at the present situation ! ”

I consoled him to the best of my ability, telling him that our complete and final victory depends solely on our own endurance and energy.

Sighing deeply, he replied :

“ But just look what's going on here ! ”

On orders from the Empress, General Maximovitch, A.D.C., General of the Emperor, yesterday arrested the Grand Duke Dimitri, who is confined under police observation to his palace on the Nevsky Prospekt.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, January 2, 1917.*

Rasputin's corpse was discovered yesterday in the ice of the little Nevka, alongside Krestovsky Island and near the Bielosselsky palace.

Up to the last moment the Empress has been hoping that “ God would spare her her comforter and only friend.”

The police are not allowing any details of the drama to be published. Besides, the *Okbrana* is pursuing its enquiries in such secrecy that even this morning Trepov, the President of the Council, replied to the impatient questions of the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch :

“ Monseigneur, I swear to you that I have nothing

whatever to do with what is going on, and know nothing of the enquiry."

There was great rejoicing among the public when it heard of the death of Rasputin the day before yesterday. People kissed each other in the streets and many went to burn candles in Our Lady of Kazan.

When it was known that the Grand Duke Dimitri was one of the assassins there was a crush to light candles before the ikons of Saint Dimitri.

The murder of Grigori is the sole topic of conversation among the unending queues of women who wait in the snow and wind at the doors of the butchers and grocers to secure their share of meat, tea, sugar, etc. They are saying that Rasputin was thrown into the Nevka alive, and approvingly quoting the proverb: *Sabâkyé, sabâtchya smerte!* "A dog's death for a dog!" They are also whispering that the Grand Duchess Tatiana, the Emperor's second daughter, witnessed the drama disguised as a lieutenant of the Chevaliers-Gardes, so that she could revenge herself on Rasputin who had tried to violate her. And carrying the vindictive ferocity of the *moujik* into the world of the Court, they add that to satiate her thirst for vengeance the dying Grigori was castrated before her eyes.

Another popular story is this: "Rasputin was still breathing when he was thrown under the ice of the Nevka. It is very important, for if so he will never become a saint." It is a fact that the Russian masses believe that the drowned can never be canonized.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, January 3, 1917.*

As soon as Rasputin's body was taken from the Nevka it was conveyed with much mystery to the Tchesma Veterans' Home, five kilometres from Petrograd on the Tsarskoïe-Selo road.

After Professor Kossorotov had made an examination of the body and noted the marks of the wounds, Sister Akulina, the young nun whom Rasputin knew in the old

days at the nunnery of Okhtaï where he exorcised her, was brought into the room where the autopsy was performed. Armed with an order from the Empress she proceeded to lay out the body, assisted solely by a hospital orderly. No one else has been admitted to the presence of the dead man: his wife and daughters, and even his most fervent disciples, have pleaded in vain for permission to see him for the last time.

The pious Akulina, once possessed by the Evil One, spent half the night in washing the body, embalming its wounds, dressing it in new garments and laying it in the coffin. She ended up by placing a crucifix on the breast and putting a letter from the Empress into the dead man's hands. This is the wording of the letter, as reported to me by Madame T——, who was the *staretz's* friend and also a great friend of Sister Akulina :

*My dear martyr, give me thy blessing, that it may follow me always on the sad and dreary path I have yet to traverse here below. And remember us from on high in your holy prayers !*

ALEXANDRA.

The next morning, which was yesterday, the Empress and Madame Virubova came to pray over the corpse of their friend, which they smothered with flowers, ikons and tears.

Many a time in my journeys to Tsarskoïe-Selo have I passed the Tchesma home, an old pleasure palace built by Catherine II, which can be seen from the road through the trees. At this time of the year, under a winter sky and lost in the immensity of the fog-bound, icy plain, the place is mournful and melancholy.

It was a very proper setting for yesterday's scene. Has the great dramatist of History conceived many episodes more pathetic than this baneful Tsarina and her pernicious companion, weeping over the swelling corpse of the lustful *moujik* whom they loved so madly and Russia will curse for centuries ?

About midnight the coffin was conveyed to Tsarskoïe-

Selo in charge of Madame Golovin and Colonel Loman, and then laid in a chapel of the imperial park.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, January 4, 1917.*

I have been to see Kokovtsov in his neat and irreproachable flat on the Mokhovaia.

Never before has the ex-President of the Council, whose pessimism has so often proved justified, given utterance to such gloomy forebodings in my presence. He is prophesying a palace drama or revolution in the very near future.

"It's a very long time since I last saw His Majesty," he said. "But I have a very close friend who sees the sovereigns frequently, and has been working with the Emperor during the last few days. The reports this friend gives me are deplorable. The Empress is outwardly calm but silent and absorbed. The Emperor has hollow cheeks, a parched throat and looks ill; he has spoken in terms of bitter reproach of the members of the Council of Empire who have taken the liberty of addressing remonstrances to him while still professing their attachment to autocracy. So he has made up his mind to change the president and vice-president of this high assembly, whose functions expire on the 14th January, but who are normally always retained in office. The Emperor's irritation with the Council of Empire is diligently fed by the Empress, who has been told that certain members of the Extreme Right are talking about having her repudiated and shut up in a nunnery. I'll tell you a secret. Trepov came to see me this morning to say that he doesn't wish to bear the responsibilities of office any longer and has offered the Emperor to resign the post of President of the Council. Now you'll understand that I have good cause to be anxious!"

"In short," I said, "it becomes increasingly clear that the present crisis is a conflict between the Emperor and the natural, official defenders of autocracy. If the Emperor does not give way, do you think we shall see a repetition of the tragedy of Paul I?"

"I'm afraid so."

" But what line will the parties of the Left take ? "

" The parties of the Left (I mean in the Duma) will probably be kept out of the drama ; they knew that the course of events can only turn to their advantage and they will wait. But as regards the masses, it's a different story."

" Do you anticipate their appearance on the scene already ? "

" I don't think that any political incident of the moment or even a palace drama would be enough to cause a popular rising. But there will be a rising the moment a military disaster or a famine occurs."

I then told Kokovtsov that I intend to ask an audience of the Emperor :

" Officially I can only discuss diplomatic and military affairs with him. But, if I feel he is becoming confidential, I shall try to draw him into the sphere of domestic politics."

" For heaven's sake, don't shrink from telling him everything ! "

" If he consents to hear me, I shall stop at nothing. If he turns the conversation, I shall confine myself to telling him how anxious I am about what is going on, matters which I have no right to mention to him."

" Perhaps you're right. In the Emperor's present frame of mind, he can only be approached with great caution ; but as I know he has a feeling of friendship for you I shouldn't be surprised if he lets himself go a bit before you."

Since the Grand Duke Dimitri has been under arrest in his palace on the Nevsky Prospekt, his friends are not without anxiety for his personal safety. On the strength of information, the source of which I do not know, they are afraid that Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, has decided to have him murdered by one of the police officers appointed to guard him. The plot, planned by the *Okhrana*, would take the form of a feigned attempt at escape ; the police officer would pretend that his life had been threatened by the Grand Duke and he had been obliged to defend himself with his arms.

To be ready for any eventuality, Trepov, the President of the Council, has sent an order to General Kabalov, the Governor of Petrograd, to post infantry at the grand-ducal palace. So for every policeman there is a sentry who keeps an eye on him.

\* \* \*

*Friday, January 5, 1917.*

To throw public curiosity and surmise off the scent, the *Okbrana* is spreading a rumour that Rasputin's coffin has been conveyed to his native village of Pokrovskoïe, near Tobolsk, or to a monastery in the Urals.

As a matter of fact, the obsequies were celebrated with the greatest secrecy at Tsarskoïe-Selo last night.

The coffin was buried in a plot of ground which Madame Virubova and two Moscow merchants bought recently on the edge of the imperial park, near Alexandrovka, with a view to building a chapel and almshouse upon it. About a month ago Monsignor Pitirim came to give this piece of land his official blessing.

The only persons present at the interment were the Emperor, the Empress, the four young Grand Duchesses, Protopopov, Madame Virubova, Colonels Loman and Maltzev and the officiating priest, Father Vassiliev, arch-priest of the Court.

The Empress has secured possession of the blood-stained blouse of the "martyr Grigori" and is preserving it piously as a relic, a *palladium* on which the fate of her dynasty hangs.

That same evening, an industrial magnate, Bogdanov, was giving a dinner at his house; the guests comprised a member of the imperial family, Prince Gabriel Constantinovitch, several officers (among them Count Kaprisit, A.D.C. to the Minister of War), Oserov, a member of the Council of Empire, and several representatives of high finance, including Putilov.

During the meal, which was very animated, the only topic of conversation was the situation at home. Helped by champagne, the company painted it in the blackest

colours, with that riotous pessimism in which the Russian imagination delights.

In conversation with Prince Gabriel, Oserov and Putilov insisted that in their opinion the only way to save the reigning house and the monarchical system is to summon a meeting of all the members of the imperial family, the party leaders in the Council of Empire and the Duma, and representatives of the nobility and the army, to declare that the Emperor is weak, unequal to his task, and unfit to reign any longer, and to proclaim the accession of the Tsarevitch under the regency of one of the Grand Dukes.

So far from protesting, Prince Gabriel confined himself to putting forward certain practical objections, but promised to let his uncles and cousins know what he had just been told.

The evening ended with a toast "to an intelligent Tsar, conscious of his duties and worthy of his people!"

The Emperor has refused Trepov's resignation without a word of explanation.

In the course of the evening I have heard that there is great excitement and agitation in the family of the Romanovs.

Several Grand Dukes, among whom I am told are the three sons of the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, Cyril, Boris and Andrew, are talking of nothing less than saving tsarism by a change of sovereign. With the help of four regiments of the guard, whose loyalty is said to be already shaken, there would be a night march on Tsarskoïe-Selo; the monarchs would be seized, the Emperor shown the necessity of abdicating and the Empress shut up in a nunnery. Then the accession of the Tsarevitch Alexis would be proclaimed under the regency of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaïevitch.

The promoters of this scheme think that the Grand Duke Dimitri, by his share in the murder of Rasputin, is marked out by fate to direct the plot and win over the troops. His cousins, Cyril and Andrew Vladimirovitch, went to see him in his palace on the Nevsky Prospekt and

begged and prayed him to "persevere relentlessly with his work of national salvation." After a long mental conflict, Dimitri Pavlovitch finally refused to "lay hands on the Emperor"; his last words were: "I will not break my oath of fealty."

The troops of the guard, with some of whom the organizers of the plot have already got into communication, are the Pavlovsky Regiment (barracks in the Champ de Mars), the Preobrajensky Regiment (barracks near the Winter Palace), the Ismailovsky Regiment (barracks off the Obvodny Canal), the Guard Cossacks (barracks behind St. Alexander Nevsky Monastery) and a squadron of the regiment of the Emperor's Hussars, who are in garrison at Tsarskoïe-Selo.

The *Okhrana* knew almost immediately what was going on in the barracks. Bieletzky has been instructed to open an enquiry conjointly with his present enquiry into the murder of Rasputin. His principal colleague is Colonel of Gendarmerie Nevdakov, head of the detective force to which the safety of the Emperor is entrusted; he recently succeeded General Spiridovitch.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, January 6, 1917.*

The most contradictory and absurd versions of the murder of Rasputin are still circulating in every quarter. The mystery is all the greater because at the very first moment the famous Bieletzky, ex-Director of the Police Department and now a senator, was commissioned by the Empress to conduct the enquiry in person. He set to work at once with General Globatchev, Chief of the *Okhrana*, and his Deputy-Chief, Colonel Kirpitchnikov. When insisting that all the powers of the *Okhrana* should be concentrated in Bieletzky's hands for the purpose of the enquiry, the Tsarina emphatically remarked: "He's the only man I trust; I shall only believe what I hear from him, and him alone . . ."

From two different sources, one of which is peculiarly private and personal, I have obtained a quantity of information which enables me to reconstruct the principal



phases of the murder. I am assured that the details agree with the facts so far established by the police enquiry.

The drama took place in the night of December 29-30 at the palace of Prince Yussupov, No. 94, Moika Quay.

Prior to that date, Felix Yussupov's relations with Rasputin had been purely casual and indefinite. To entice him to his residence he resorted to a not particularly pleasant device. On the 28th December he went to the *staretz's* house and said to him :

"My wife came back from the Crimea yesterday and is extremely anxious to meet you. She would like to see you quite privately and have a quiet talk with you. Won't you come and take tea to-morrow evening at our house? You must come rather late, about half-past eleven, as my mother-in-law is dining with us; but she will certainly have left by then."

The idea of making friends with Princess Irene, a very pretty woman, who is a daughter of the Grand Duke Alexander Michailovitch and a niece of the Emperor, took Rasputin's fancy immediately, and he promised to come. But, contrary to Yussupov's statement, Princess Irene was still in the Crimea.

About eleven o'clock the next evening (December 29), all the conspirators met at the Yussupov palace, in one of the rooms on the first floor where supper was served. Prince Felix had with him the Grand Duke Dimitri, Purishkevitch, a member of the Duma, Captain Sukhotin and a Polish doctor, Stanislas de Lazovert, who is in charge of one of the great medical departments of the army. Whatever rumour may say, there was no orgy at the Yussupov palace that night; no ladies were present at the gathering, whether Princess R—, or Madame D—, or Countess P—, or the dancer Karally.

At a quarter past eleven Prince Felix drove in his car to Rasputin's residence, which is No. 68, Gorokhovaia, about two kilometres from the Moika.

Yussupov groped his way up Rasputin's staircase, for the lights of the house were out and the night was exceedingly dark. In this darkness he could not find his way. When on the point of ringing, he thought he had mistaken

the door and even the right floor. Then he said to himself : " If I'm wrong, it means that fate is against me and Rasputin must live."

He rang. The door was opened by Rasputin in person ; his faithful servant Dunia, followed him.

" I've come for you, Father, as we arranged," said Yussupov. " My car is at the door."

And in Russian fashion, with a great show of affection, he gave the *staretz* a resounding kiss on the mouth.

Rasputin, suspicious by nature, protested in a mocking tone :

" Heavens ! What a kiss, boy ! I hope it isn't the kiss of Judas . . . Come, let's go ! You go in front ! Good-bye, Dunia ! "

Ten minutes later, i.e. about midnight, they got out of the car at the palace on the Moika.

Yussupov introduced his guest into a small room on the ground floor leading into the garden. The Grand Duke Dimitri, Purishkevitch, Captain Sukhotin and Dr. de Lazovert waited on the upper floor from which the sound of a gramophone playing dance music could be heard from time to time.

Yussupov said to Rasputin :

" My mother-in-law is still up there with a few young friends of ours, but they are all just about to go. My wife will then join us at once. Let's sit down ! "

They seated themselves in large armchairs, and talked about occultism and spiritualism.

The *staretz* never required any invitation to discourse on such subjects to his heart's content. In any case, he was in great form that evening ; his eyes sparkled and he seemed very pleased with himself. With a view to enlisting all the arts of seduction in his attack on young Princess Irene, he had put on his best clothes, his ceremonial get-up ; he was wearing wide trousers of black velvet disappearing into new top boots, a white silk blouse with blue embroidery and a sash of black satin trimmed with gold braid, which was a present from the Tsarina

Between the chairs in which Yussupov and his guest were lounging a table had previously been placed ; on it

stood two plates of cream cakes, a bottle of Marsala and a tray with six glasses. The cakes nearest to Rasputin had been poisoned with cyanide of potassium, supplied by a doctor from Obukhov Hospital, who is a friend of Prince Felix. Each of the three glasses by the side of these cakes contained three decigrams of cyanide, dissolved in a few drops of water. Small though it may seem, this is a tremendous dose, four centigrammes alone being fatal.

Hardly had conversation begun before Yussupov casually filled a glass of each kind and took a cake from the plate nearest to him.

"Aren't you drinking, Father Grigori?" he asked the *staretz*.

"No, I'm not thirsty."

The conversation continued in lively tones on the practices of spiritualism, spell-binding and divination.

Once again Yussupov invited Rasputin to have something to eat and drink. Declined again.

As the clock was striking one, Grishka suddenly lost patience and cried out rudely :

"Why isn't your wife coming down ! You know I'm not used to being kept waiting. No one ever takes the liberty of keeping me waiting—not even the Empress."

Knowing how swift to anger Rasputin is, Felix murmured soothingly :

"If Irene isn't here in a few minutes I'll fetch her."

"You'd better ; I'm beginning to get very tired of this place."

In a casual tone, but with fear gripping at his throat, Yussupov tried to get the conversation going again. Suddenly the *staretz* emptied his glass. Smacking his lips, he said :

"Your marsala is lovely. I could drink lots of it !"

Yussupov mechanically filled the two other glasses which contained the rest of the cyanide but not the glass which Grishka held out to him.

Rasputin snatched one and tossed down the contents at one gulp. Yussupov expected to see his victim totter and collapse.

But poison does not always have any effect. Another glassful. Still no effect.

The murderer, who had hitherto displayed remarkable nerve and self-possession, began to feel very uncomfortable. On the excuse of going to fetch Princess Irene, he left the room and went upstairs to consult his accomplices.

The conference was a short one. Purishkevitch emphatically declared in favour of precipitating the crisis.

"If we don't," he said, "the beast will escape us. And as he's at any rate half-poisoned, we shall reap the full consequences of the crime without any of the advantages."

"But I haven't a revolver," said Yussupov. "Take mine!" replied the Grand Duke Dimitri. Yussupov went back to the ground floor holding the Grand Duke's revolver in his left hand, behind his back.

"My wife is exceedingly sorry to have kept you waiting," he said; "her guests have only just left; she's following me."

But Rasputin could hardly hear what he was saying; he was striding up and down, puffing and blowing. The cyanide was working.

Still Yussupov hesitated to use his weapon. Suppose he missed! Being slight and effeminate, he was afraid to attack the burly *moujik* from in front; the latter could have knocked him out with one blow of his fist.

But there was no time to lose. At any moment Rasputin might discover that he had fallen into a trap, catch his enemy by the throat and escape over his prostrate body.

Recovering his self-possession, Yussupov walked casually to the far end of the room, stopped at a table on which various *objets d'art* were laid out, and said:

"As you're on your legs, come and have a look at this fine Italian Renaissance crucifix I bought recently."

"Show it me; you can't look too often at the image of Our Lord crucified."

The *staretz* walked up to the table.

"Here you are," said Yussupov. "Look at it. Isn't it beautiful!"

As Rasputin was bending over the sacred figure, Yussupov stood on his left and fired twice into his ribs, almost point blank.

Rasputin cried out "Oh!" and he fell in a heap on the floor.

Yussupov stooped down to the body, felt the pulse, examined the eye by raising the lid and could see no sign of life.

At the sound of the shots, the accomplices upstairs rushed down at once.

The Grand Duke Dimitri said :

"Now we must throw him in the water quick. I'll go and find my car."

His companions went back to the first floor to arrange how to move the body.

Twelve minutes later Yussupov returned to the room downstairs to have a look at his victim.

He shrank back in horror.

Rasputin had half risen, supporting himself on his hands. With a supreme effort he staggered to his feet, brought his heavy fist down on Yussupov's shoulder and tore off his epaulette, saying in a last whisper :

"You wretch! You'll be hung to-morrow! I'm going to tell the Empress everything!"

Yussupov shook him off with great difficulty, ran out of the room and went upstairs again. White to the lips and covered with blood, he called to his accomplices in a choking voice :

"He's still alive! He spoke to me!"

Then he collapsed on a sofa in a dead faint. Purishkevitch seized him in his rough hands, shook him, lifted him, took away his revolver and dragged him with the other conspirators to the room on the ground floor.

The *staretz* was not there. He had had strength enough to open the door leading to the garden and was dragging himself over the snow.

Purishkevitch fired one bullet into his neck and another into his body, while Yussupov, now a yelling maniac, went to fetch a bronze candlestick and battered in his victim's skull with it.

It was a quarter past two in the morning. At the same moment, the Grand Duke Dimitri's car drew up at the little gate of the garden.

Assisted by a servant on whom they could rely, the conspirators wrapped Rasputin in his cloak and even put on his overshoes, so that nothing incriminating should be left in the palace. They lifted the body into the car, in which the Grand Duke Dimitri, Dr. de Lazovert and Captain Sukhotin quickly took their places. Then the car made for Krestovsky Island at full speed, Lazovert showing the way.

Captain Sukhotin had explored the banks on the previous evening. On a signal from him, the car stopped by a small bridge below which the swift current had produced a mass of ice-floes with holes between them. Not without difficulty, the three accomplices carried their heavy victim to the edge of a hole and threw it in the water. But the practical difficulties of the operation, the intense darkness of the night, the icy hiss of the wind, fear of discovery and anxiety to get it all over put their nerves on edge to such an extent that they did not notice that, in thrusting the corpse in by the feet, they knocked off one of the goloshes which remained on the ice. It was the discovery of this golosh which three days later showed the police where the body had been thrown in.

While this sinister task was in progress on Krestovsky island, something happened at the palace on the Moïka where Prince Felix and Purishkevitch had been left alone, and were occupied in feverishly obliterating all traces of the murder.

When Rasputin left his residence on the Gorokhovaïa, an agent of the *Okhrana*, Tikhomirov, whose function it was to watch over the safety of the *staretz*, had immediately posted himself so as to keep an eye on the Yussupov palace. Of the preliminaries of the drama he necessarily had no knowledge.

But if he could not hear the two revolver shots which wounded Rasputin, he heard those fired in the garden quite clearly. He began to feel uneasy and hastily went off to advise the police lieutenant at the nearest station. When they returned together, they saw a car leave the Yussupov palace and tear away at top speed towards the Blue Bridge.

The police lieutenant wanted to enter the palace, but the Prince's majordomo, who received him at the door, said :

"What has happened has nothing to do with you. His Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Dimitri will inform the proper authority to-morrow. You must go away !"

The lieutenant pushed his way in. In the vestibule he found Purishkevitch who said to him :

"We've just killed the man who was disgracing Russia."

"Where is the body ?"

"You shall not know. We are sworn to absolute secrecy about what has happened."

The lieutenant returned post haste to his station on the Morskaïa and telephoned to Colonel Grigoriev, Chief of Police of the 2nd District. Barely half an hour had elapsed before General Balk, Prefect of Police, General Count Tatichév, Commander-in-Chief of the Gendarmerie, General Globatchev, head of the *Okbrana*, and Vassiliev, Director of the Police Department, arrived at the Yussupov palace.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, January 7, 1917.*

Pokrovski told me yesterday evening that the Emperor would receive me at 6 p.m. to-day ; he added :

"I beg of you to talk to him frankly, without any reserve . . . You can do us such a great service !"

"If only the Emperor will be good enough to listen to me, I'll tell him everything that's on my mind. But I know his present frame of mind and my task will not be easy."

"I hope God will inspire you !"

"It is far more important that *a certain person* should give God a chance of inspiring me !"

Shortly before six I was taken into the palace of Tsarskoïe-Selo by Tieplov, the Master of the Ceremonies, who had accompanied me from Petrograd in the imperial train.

Prince Dolgorukov, Marshal of the Court, and the A.D.C. on duty received me at the door of the main drawing-room.

When we reached the library, which is next to the Emperor's study and the spot where the Ethiopian sentry keeps his motionless watch and ward, we chatted together for ten minutes or so. We talked about the war and the very long time it will still last ; we again pledged our faith in final victory ; we recognized the necessity of telling the world that we are more determined than ever to shatter the power of the Germanics, etc. But the strong words of those with whom I was speaking were contradicted by the gloomy and anxious expression of their faces and the unuttered counsel I could read in their eyes : " For God" sake, speak your mind to His Majesty ! "

The Ethiopian opened the door.

The moment I entered, I was struck by the Emperor's tired look and his anxious and absorbed expression.

" I asked Your Majesty to receive me," I said, " because I have always received great encouragement from you and I need encouragement very badly to-day."

He answered in a dead, dull voice, which I had never heard before :

" I am still ruthlessly determined to continue the war until victory, decisive and complete victory. Of course you have read my recent *prikaz* to the army ? "

" Yes, indeed, and I admire the spirit of confidence and unflinching energy which animates the document. But what a gap, what a gulf there is between this glowing declaration of your sovereign will and the facts as they are ! "

The Emperor looked at me, suspicion in his eye. I continued :

" In that *prikaz* you proclaim your inflexible determination to conquer Constantinople. But how will your armies get there ? Are you not alarmed at what is happening in Rumania ? If a halt is not called at once to the retreat of the Russian troops, will they not have to evacuate the whole of Moldavia before long and retire behind the Pruth, or even the Dniester ? And in that case, do you not fear that Germany will organize a provisional government at Bucharest, raise another Hohenzollern to



the throne and then make peace with a Rumania thus restored ? ”

“ It is certainly a very alarming possibility, so I am doing everything possible to increase General Sakharov’s army ; but the transport and supply difficulties are colossal. Still, I hope that in ten days or so we shall be able to resume the offensive in Moldavia.”

“ Oh ! In ten days ! Then are the thirty-one infantry divisions and twelve cavalry divisions which General Sakharov demanded already on the spot ? ”

He replied evasively :

“ I cannot say ; I don’t remember. But he already has many troops, very many . . . And I shall send him many more, many more . . . ”

“ Very soon ? ”

“ I hope so.”

The conversation feebly dragged on. I did not succeed in fixing either the Emperor’s eyes or attention. We seemed to be a thousand miles from each other.

Then I resorted to the great argument I have always found so effective in opening the gates of his mind : I invoked the memory of his father, Alexander III, whose portrait hung above us as we talked :

“ You have often told me, Sire, that at difficult moments you have appealed to your beloved father and never appealed in vain. May his noble spirit inspire you now ! The situation is so serious ! ”

“ Yes, my father’s memory is a great help to me.”

And with that vague remark he again let the conversation drop.

With a disconsolate sigh, I continued :

“ I see, Sire, that I shall leave this room far more anxious than when I came in. For the first time, I feel that Your Majesty’s thoughts and mine are not in touch.”

He protested affectionately :

“ But I have every confidence in you ! We have so many common memories, and I know I can count on your friendship ! ”

“ It is because of that very friendship that you see me so sad and anxious ; I have only told you the least part of

my fears. There is one subject on which the ambassador of France has no right to speak to you ; you can guess what it is. But I should be unworthy of the confidence you have always shown in me if I did not admit that all the symptoms which have struck me for several weeks, the horrible doubts I observe among the best minds, the anxiety I see written on the faces of your most loyal subjects, are making me very alarmed for the future of Russia."

"I know that there is great excitement in the Petrograd drawing-rooms."

Without giving me time to deal with these words, he asked me quite casually :

"What's become of our friend Ferdinand of Bulgaria ? "

I replied in the coldest and most official tone :

"I have heard nothing of him for many months, Sire."

I lapsed into silence.

With his usual awkward timidity, the Emperor could find nothing to say. But he did not dismiss me ; no doubt he did not want me to leave him with painful impressions. Gradually his features relaxed and his face lit up with a sad smile. I felt sorry for him and came to his rescue. On the table near which we were seated I noticed a dozen magnificently bound volumes with the monogram of Napoleon I :

"Your Majesty has paid the ambassador of France a delicate compliment by having these books by you to-day. Napoleon is a great master to consult at critical moments ; no man ever gave Fate greater shocks."

"That's why I revere him so much." I kept back the reply : "Yes, but a very platonic reverence !" The Emperor rose and accompanied me to the door, holding my hand long and affectionately in his own.

While the imperial train was taking me back to Petrograd through a blinding snowstorm, I reviewed my memories of this audience. The Emperor's words, his silences and reticences, his grave, drawn features and furtive, distant gaze, the impenetrability of his thoughts and the thoroughly vague and enigmatical quality of his personality, confirm me in a notion which has been haunting me for months, the notion that Nicholas II feels himself overwhelmed and

dominated by events, that he has lost all faith in his mission or his work, that he has so to speak abdicated inwardly and is now resigned to disaster and ready for the sacrificial altar. Thus his last *prikaz* to the army, with its proud claim to Poland and Constantinople, can only be what I thought it at the time, a kind of political will, a final announcement of the glorious vision he had imagined for Russia and which he now sees dissolving into thin air.

\* \* \*

*Monday, January 8, 1917.*

By imperial order the Grand Duke Dimitri has been sent to Kasvin, in Persia, where he will be attached to the staff of one of the combatant armies. Prince Felix Yussupov has been banished to his estate in the Government of Kursk (South Russia). In the case of Purishkevitch, his prestige among the rural masses and his enormous influence with the reactionary party as one of the leaders of the "Black Bands" have made the Emperor reflect that it would be dangerous to strike at him; he has been left at liberty. But on the day after the murder he left for the front where the military police are keeping him under observation.

The idea of removing Rasputin seems to have been conceived in the brain of Felix Yussupov about the middle of November. He is said to have mentioned the matter then to one of the leaders of the "Cadet" party, the brilliant lawyer, Basil Maklakov; but at that stage he was thinking of having the *staretz* killed by hired assassins and not of doing the deed himself.

Apparently the lawyer dissuaded him from that course: "The wretches who agreed to kill Rasputin for pay would promptly go and sell you to the *Okbrana* the moment they had your money in their pockets." In his perplexity Yussupov is supposed to have asked: "Couldn't reliable men be found?" To which Maklakov wittily replied: "I don't know; I don't keep a murderers' agency!"

It was on the second December that Felix Yussupov made up his mind to act himself.

On that day he was present in a front box at the public sitting of the Duma. Purishkevitch had just mounted the tribune and was thundering out his terrible indictment of the "occult forces which are disgracing Russia." When the orator cried to the quivering assembly: "To your feet, you Ministers! Go to the *Stavka*, fall on your knees before the Tsar, and don't shrink from telling him that the nation is murmuring in its fury and that an obscure *moujik* shall govern Russia no longer!" Yussupov was shaken by uncontrollable emotion. Madame P—, who was sitting by him, saw him all of a sudden turn pale and tremble.

The next day, December 3, he went to Purishkevitch.

After swearing him to secrecy, he told him that for some time he had been making friends with Rasputin with the idea of discovering what intrigues he was plotting at court, and that he had shrunk from no subterfuge to gain his confidence: he had been wonderfully successful, as he had learned from the *staretz's* own lips that the Tsarina's supporters were proposing that Nicholas II should be deposed and the Tsarevitch Alexis proclaimed emperor under the regency of his mother, and the first act of the new reign would be to offer peace to the Teutonic Empires.

Seeing Purishkevitch utterly overwhelmed by this revelation, Yussupov then revealed his scheme of killing Rasputin and added:

"I should like to be able to count on your help, Vladimir Mitophanovitch, to deliver Russia from the ghastly nightmare with which she is contending." Purishkevitch has a warm heart and great rapidity of decision, and he enthusiastically assented. Then and there they planned the scheme of the trap and fixed the date of December 29 for its execution.

The French, English and Italian delegates to the allied conference were to have left for Petrograd about this time, but Buchanan, Carlotti and I are advising our governments to postpone their departure. It is futile to expose them to the fatigue and risks of a voyage through the Arctic if they will only find an utterly helpless government here.



## CHAPTER VI

JANUARY 9—28, 1917.



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The imperial family address a joint appeal to Nicholas II ; the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna confides her sorrows and anxieties to me.—My English colleague, Sir George Buchanan, tries to tackle the Emperor on the problems of domestic politics ; he receives cutting replies.—A story-book element in the conspiracy of the Grand Dukes.—Reception of the Diplomatic Corps at Tsarskoïe-Selo on the first day of the orthodox New Year ; lugubrious impressions.—The Emperor's rage with the Grand Dukes ; an historical precedent.—The Crown Prince of Rumania arrives in Petrograd ; cordial relations between Russia and Rumania.—A talk with the Grand Duke Paul about his son's share in Rasputin murder.—An A.D.C. General of the Emperor ventures to advise him to send away the Empress ; Nicholas II's chivalrous attitude.—The ghost of Rasputin ; nocturnal apparitions.—What the magician Papus thought of the *starets* ; future miracles.

*Tuesday, January 9, 1917.*

Sir George Buchanan, who is no less anxious than I am about the situation, thinks that the Emperor might possibly listen to advice from his cousin, the King of England, and has therefore asked Balfour to have a personal telegram from the King sent to the Tsar. When delivering this telegram, Buchanan would impressively add the necessary comments. Balfour approved of this step, and Buchanan has just prayed an audience of the Emperor.

Yesterday evening Prince Gabriel Constantinovitch gave a supper to his mistress, formerly an actress.

The guests included the Grand Duke Boris, Prince Igor Constantinovitch, Putilov, Colonel Shegubatov, a few officers and a squad of elegant courtesans.

During the evening the only topic of conversation was the conspiracy,—the regiments of the Guard which can be relied on, the most favourable moment for the outbreak, etc. And all this with the servants moving about, harlots looking on and listening, gypsies singing and the whole company bathed in the aroma of Moët and Chandon, *brut impérial* which flowed in streams !



To wind up, there was a toast to the salvation of Holy Russia.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, January 10, 1917.*

About a month ago, the Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna, wife of the Grand Duke Cyril, was received by the Empress and, finding her more communicative than usual, ventured to mention certain burning topics to her.

"It is with grief and horror," she said, "that I have observed the growth of hostile feeling towards your Majesty . . ."

The Empress interrupted :

"You're quite wrong, my dear. As a matter of fact, I've been quite wrong myself. Only quite lately I was still thinking that Russia hated me. I know now that it is only Petrograd society which hates me, the corrupt and godless society which thinks of nothing but dancing and dining and takes no interest in anything but its pleasures and adulteries, while everywhere around us blood is flowing in streams ! . . . Blood ! . . . Blood !"

She seemed to be almost choking with rage as she uttered those words, and had to stop for a moment. Then she continued :

"But *now* I have the great consolation that the whole of Russia—the real Russia, poor, humble, peasant Russia is with me. If I showed you the telegrams and letters I receive every day from all parts of the Empire, you'd see it all for yourself. But still I'm very grateful to you for speaking so frankly."

What the poor Tsarina does not know is that Sturmer had the brilliant idea—continued and improved upon by Protopopov—of getting the *Okbrana* to send her every day scores of letters and telegrams worded something like this :

*Oh our beloved sovereign, mother and guardian of our adored Tsarevitch . . . Guardian of our traditions . . .*

*Oh our great and good Tsarina . . . Protect us against the wicked . . . Save us from our enemies . . . Save Russia !*

During the last few days, her sister, the Grand Duchess Sergei, abbess of the Convent of Martha-and-Mary, came specially from Moscow to tell her of the growing exasperation of Moscow society and all the plotting that is going on in the shadow of the Kremlin.

The Emperor and Empress gave her a very frigid reception ; she was so amazed at it that she asked :

" Perhaps it would have been better if I had not come ? "

" Yes," replied the Empress drily.

" Then perhaps I'd better go ? "

" Yes; by the first train," sternly replied the Emperor.

Trepov having asked again and again to be allowed to resign was put on the " retired list " yesterday.

His successor is Prince Nicholas Dimitrievitch Golitzin, a member of the Extreme Right in the Council of Empire. Hitherto his career has been purely administrative—and obscure. He is said to be sensible and honest, but weak and indolent.

In Trepov the cause of the Allies loses its strongest guarantee, and I fear that in this blunt and faithful servant the monarchy of the tsars is also losing its last pillar and its last safeguard.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, January 11, 1917:*

Yesterday the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna invited me to lunch to-day with my First Secretary, Charles de Chambrun.

At a few minutes before one I reached the Vladimir palace.

I was about to mount the stairs when General Knorring, who is attached to the Grand Duchess's person, came flying down towards me and handed a letter to a colonel who swiftly walked away.

"Forgive me for not being in the vestibule to receive you," he said. "These are such serious times!"

I noticed his pallor and haggard features. We had ascended a few steps together when another colonel appeared at the hall door; Knorring immediately went down again.

As I reached the upper landing, through the open door of the drawing-room I caught a wonderful view of the Neva, the Cathedral of SS. Peter-and-Paul, the bastions of the Fortress and the state prison. Seated in the embrasure of the window was the lovely Mademoiselle Olive, maid of honour to the Grand Duchess; she was lost in thought and gazing out at the Fortress. She did not hear me come.

I broke in on her reverie :

"Mademoiselle, I've just guessed the direction of your thoughts, if not your thoughts themselves. You seem to be looking at the prison very hard!"

"Yes, I was looking at the prison. In these days one can't help looking at it."

As she turned to my secretary, she added with her delightful laugh :

"Will you come and see me, Monsieur de Chambrun, when I'm lying on the straw in a dungeon there?"

At ten minutes past one, the Grand Duchess, who is usually very punctual, came in with her third son, the Grand Duke Andrew. She was pale and emaciated.

"I'm late," she said. "But it's not my fault. You know, or at any rate you can guess what I'm going through. We'll have a quiet talk after lunch. Meanwhile, tell me about the war. What is your opinion?"

I answered that notwithstanding all the doubts and difficulties of the moment, my faith in our final victory remains absolutely unshaken.

"It does me good to hear you talk like that!" Luncheon was announced. There were six of us at table; the Grand Duchess and myself, the Grand Duke Andrew, Mademoiselle Olive, Chambrun and General Knorring.

Conversation was very slow at first. And then, bit by bit and half hinting, we broached the topic which was on

all our minds, the crisis at home and the great thunder-cloud gathering on the horizon.

When we rose from table, the Grand Duchess offered me a chair next to hers and said :

"Now let's talk."

But a servant approached and told us that the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch had just come and been taken into the next room. The Grand Duchess apologized to me, asked the Grand Duke Andrew to look after me and went into the other room.

As the door was opened, I recognized the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch : he had a high colour and his eyes were burning and grave ; he had drawn himself up and was leaning forward in a fighting attitude. Five minutes later, the Grand Duchess called in her son.

Mademoiselle Olive, General Knorring, Chambrun and I were left alone.

"We're in the thick of a drama," Mademoiselle Olive said to us. "Did you notice how terribly upset the Grand Duchess looked ? What has the Grand Duke Nicholas come to say ?"

At ten minutes to two, the Grand Duchess came in again, breathing rather hard. With an effort to appear self-possessed, she fired questions at me about my recent audience with the Emperor.

"So you weren't able to discuss the internal situation with him ?" she asked.

"No, he obstinately shut his ears to that subject. After beating about the bush time and time again, I thought at one moment that I was going to force him to hear me. But he cut me short by asking me if I had had any recent news of Tsar Ferdinand !"

"It's deplorable !" she said, dropping her arms in a despairing gesture.

After a pause, she resumed :

"What can we do ? With the exception of her who is the source of all the trouble, no one has any influence with the Emperor. During the last fortnight we have all worn ourselves out with trying to prove to him that he is ruining the dynasty and ruining Russia, and that his

reign, which might have been so glorious, is going to end in a catastrophe. He won't hear a word. It's simply tragic! However, we are going to try joint action by the whole imperial family. That's what the Grand Duke Nicholas came to see me about."

"Will it be confined to *platonic* action?"

We looked at each other in silence. She guessed that what was in my mind was the tragedy of Paul I, as she replied with a horrified stare: "Oh God! Whatever will happen?"

She sat dumb for a moment, fear staring in her eyes. Then she continued timidly:

"I could count on you, in case of need, couldn't I?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Thank you," she gravely murmured.

A servant interrupted us for the second time. The Grand Duchess explained that the whole of the imperial family had assembled in the next room and were only waiting for her to join them to start the discussion. Her last words were:

"And now pray to God to protect us!" She held out her hand; it was trembling violently.

\* \* \*

*Friday, January 12, 1917.*

I am told from various sources that an attempt to assassinate the Empress was made the evening of the day before yesterday, when she was visiting her hospital at Tsarskoie-Selo. It is said that the author, an officer, was hanged yesterday morning. Absolute secrecy is maintained as to the motive for the act and its details.

All the members of the imperial family, including the Dowager Queen of Greece, who met at the house of the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlova yesterday, have addressed a joint letter to the Emperor.

The letter, couched in the most respectful terms, draws the sovereign's attention to the dire peril to which his policy at home is exposing Russia and the dynasty; it

ends by pleading for a pardon for the Grand Duke Dimitri, lest worse evils befall.

Sazonov, on whom I called to-day, said to me :

"There is no way out of the course on which the Emperor has embarked. Judging by our historical precedents, the era of assassinations has begun. From the point of view of the war, we have a nasty ditch ahead of us ; it will be a violent shock ; but afterwards all will go well . . . I maintain my steadfast faith in our ultimate victory."

\* \* \*

*Saturday, January 13, 1917.*

Sir George Buchanan was received by the Emperor yesterday.

After telling him of the grave concern of King George and the British Government at the internal situation in Russia, he asked the sovereign's permission to speak to him absolutely candidly.

The two men were standing when these introductory phrases were spoken. Without asking Buchanan to sit down, the Emperor drily replied :

"I'm listening."

In firm and very agitated tones, Buchanan then pointed out the enormous harm that was being done to Russia, and therefore her allies, by the confusion and anxiety which was on the increase in every class of Russian society. He did not shrink from denouncing the intrigues which German agents are fomenting in the immediate entourage of the Empress and which have cost her the affection of her subjects. He referred to the evil influence of Protopopov, etc. At last, after protesting his devotion to the Russian sovereigns, he implored the Emperor not to hesitate between the two courses which are now open to him, one of which leads to victory and the other to the most dire catastrophe.

The Emperor's manner was cold and stiff ; he broke the silence only to put forward two objections in a dry tone. The first was : "You tell me, Ambassador, that I must deserve the confidence of my people. Isn't it rather for

my people to deserve *my* confidence ? ” The second was : “ You seem to think that I take advice in choosing my ministers. You’re quite wrong ; I choose them myself, unassisted . . . ” And thereupon he brought the audience to a close with the simple words :

“ Good-bye, Ambassador.”

At bottom, the Emperor has simply given expression to the pure doctrine of autocracy, by virtue of which he is on the throne. To realize how far that doctrine is behind the English theory, I have only to remember what the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Winchelsey, writing on behalf of King Edward I, penned to Pope Boniface VIII about the end of the thirteenth century : “ It is the custom of the Kingdom of England that, in all matters of public interest, all those who are concerned should be consulted.”

I give the wording of the Emperor’s reply to the letter which the imperial family sent him the day before yesterday :

*I allow no one to give me advice. A murder is always a murder. In any case, I know that the consciences of several who signed that letter are not clear.*

Dining at the Restaurant Contant this evening, I saw pretty Madame D—— at the next table with three officers of the *Chevaliers-Gardes* ; she was in mourning.

During the night of January 6-7, she was arrested on suspicion of having taken part in the murder of Rasputin, or at any rate known of the preparations. Thanks to the high influences which protect her, she was simply kept under observation in her flat and released three days later. When a police officer asked her for the key of her bureau in order to secure her papers, she replied sweetly and simply :

“ You’ll only find love-letters.”

The remark is Madame D—— personified.

Twenty-six years of age, divorced, remarried at once, then separated from her second husband, she leads a wild life. “ Every evening, or rather every night, she holds high revel until morning : theatre, ballet, supper, gypsy

singers, tango, champagne, etc. And yet it would be a great mistake to judge her solely by this tawdry dissipation; at bottom she is warm-hearted, proud and an enthusiast.

Rasputin's murder, of the preparations for which she knew, came as a thunderbolt to her. The Grand Duke Dimitri seemed to her a hero, the saviour of Russia. She went into mourning on learning the news of his arrest. When she heard that he had been sent to the Russian army front in Persia, she swore to continue his patriotic work and avenge him.

Since the police evacuated her residence four days ago, she has been concerned in all the ramifications of the plot against the Emperor, carrying letters to some and passwords to others. Yesterday she called on two colonels of the guard to win them over to the good cause. She knows that the agents of the terrible *Okbrana* are watching her, and is fertile in resources to throw them off the scent. Any night she expects to be incarcerated in the fortress or sent to Siberia; but she has never been so happy before. The heroines of the Fronde, Madame de Longueville, Madame de Montbazou and Madame de Lesdiguières must have known this unreal exaltation, by virtue of which the conscientiousness of a great peril rekindles a great love.

When she finished dinner she passed close to my table, followed by her three officers. She came up to me. I rose to shake hands. In rapid tones she said:

"I know that our mutual friend came to see you yesterday and told you everything . . . He's extremely anxious about me. It's only natural . . . he loves me so much! Anyhow, he thought you would be ready to help me in case of disaster and was anxious to make certain. But I knew what you'd say. What could you do for me if things went badly? Nothing; that's obvious . . . But I'm grateful for the nice things you've said about me, and I'm sure that at the bottom of your heart—though not as ambassador—I have your approval . . . We may never meet again. Good-bye!"

And with these words she sped away swiftly and silently, escorted by her *Chevaliers-Gardes*.



*Sunday, January 14, 1917.*

To-day, the first day of the New Year according to the orthodox calendar, the Emperor received the congratulations of the Diplomatic Corps at Tsarskoïe-Selo.

The cold is intense—38° !

The horses of the court carriages, which were waiting for us at the imperial station, were accoutred in ice, and all the way to the Great Palace I could see nothing of the landscape, the thick frost on the windows making them quite opaque.

When we entered the ballroom in which the function was to take place, Evreinov, the Director of Ceremonies—an ardent patriot and hot-headed nationalist who has often been to give me the benefit of his loathing of Rasputin and hatred of the pro-German party—whispered in my ear in a tense voice :

“ Well ! Ambassador ; haven’t I been right all these months in telling you that our great and holy Russia was being led to disaster ! Don’t you feel that we’re now on the very brink ? ”

We had hardly taken our places before the Emperor appeared, surrounded by his A.D.C., Generals and high dignitaries. He took the staff of each embassy and legation in turn, and there was the formal and routine exchange of compliments and congratulations, smiles and handshakes. As usual Nicholas II was kind and natural and he even affected a certain care-free air ; but his pale, thin face betrayed the nature of his secret thoughts.

While he was making his rounds, I talked to my Italian colleague, the Marchese Carlotti, and we simultaneously passed the same observation : among the whole of the Tsar’s brilliant and glittering suite, there was not a face which did not express anxiety . . .

On our way back to the imperial station, our carriages passed a small church, a picturesque and isolated structure in the Muscovite style. It was the Feodorovski Sobor ; in its mysterious crypt is the favourite private chapel of Alexandra Feodorovna. It was dark already and under its thick shroud of snow the dome of the sanctuary projected vaguely through the fog. I thought of all the

hours of sighing, exaltation or utter prostration the Empress has spent there. And I seemed to see the ghost of Rasputin flitting round the entrance.

\* \* \*

*Monday January 15, 1917.*

The Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch has been banished to his property at Grushevka, in the Government of Kherson, far from any town and even from a human habitation.

The imperial order was conveyed to him yesterday, notwithstanding the religious significance of New Year's Day. As he was given no time to make any arrangements, he took his departure the very same evening.

When I heard the news, an historical precedent came to my mind at once. On November 19, 1787, Louis XVI banished the Duc d'Orléans to his Villers-Cotterets estate, as a punishment for having told the Parliament of Paris that the States General alone had the right to grant the King additional taxes. Has Russia really got as far as 1787? No . . . she is already a long way beyond it.

By wreaking his vengeance on the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch, the Emperor has obviously intended to frighten the imperial family. He has succeeded: it is terror-stricken. But it may be that Nicholas Michailovitch deserved "neither this too great honour nor the indignity." He is not really dangerous. The final crisis, through which tsarism and Russia are passing, calls for a Retz or a Mirabeau. Nicholas Michailovitch is a critic and dilettante rather than a party man; he is too fond of drawing-room epigrams. He is in no way an apostle of adventure and the offensive.

Whatever the cause, the conspiracy of the Grand Dukes has missed fire. Maklakov, the Duma deputy, was quite right the day before yesterday when he told Madame de Derfelden (who is my authority) that "the Grand Dukes are incapable of agreeing on a plan of campaign. Not one of them dares show the slightest initiative, and each of them claims to be working solely on his own behalf. They

want the Duma to put the match to the powder. In other words, they are expecting of us what we are expecting of them."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, January 17, 1917.*

Yesterday, Pokrovski had a long audience of the Emperor. He told him in the strongest terms how impossible it is for him to accept responsibility for foreign policy in existing circumstances. Appealing to his long, loyal and devoted past, he pleaded with his master to break with the evil counsels of Protopopov; he actually begged him, *with clenched hands*, to open his eyes to the "imminent catastrophe."

The Tsar listened to him very gently and then ordered him to remain in office, telling him that "the situation is not as tragic as all that, and everything will come right."

In the evening of the day before yesterday, His Majesty received his new President of the Council.

Prince Nicholas Golitzin, who is a perfectly honest man, had expressly declined the presidency of the Council, which has been forced upon him "by imperial order." He therefore considered himself entitled to discuss the matter quite frankly with the Emperor; he painted him the gloomiest picture of the public state of mind in Russia, particularly Moscow and Petrograd; he did not hide from him that the lives of the sovereigns are in danger and that the Moscow regiments are talking openly of proclaiming another Tsar. The Emperor received his statements with placid indifference. He merely replied:

"The Empress and I know that we are in God's hands. His will be done!"

Prince Golitzin wound up by begging the Emperor to accept his resignation. He received the same answer as Pokrovski.

At this very time, the Empress was praying at the tomb of Rasputin. Every day she goes there with Madame Virubova, and spends hours absorbed in prayer.

*Friday, January 19, 1917.*

Schubin-Pozdeïev, who is not without sense and perspicacity under his old roué exterior, has just told me something very true :

" You know what I thought of Rasputin. The mystical and filthy rake always filled me with unutterable loathing. I met him only once in a decent house into which I'd strayed. He was going out as I went in. The ladies present were watching him make his exit with languishing glances. Speaking personally, I had an irresistible desire to kick him through the door. So you see I'm not exactly in mourning for him. But all the same I think it was a great mistake to kill him. He had won the confidence and affection of our beloved sovereigns. He inspired them, encouraged and amused them, consoled and exhorted them, and was a general tonic. In the intervals of his fornications he gave them advice for the good of their souls and the government of the Empire. He often made them cry, as he didn't shrink from brow-beating them. He sometimes made them laugh too, for when he kept out of his mystical drivel, he had no equal in broad humour. They couldn't get on without him. He was their main-spring, their toy and their fetish. He oughtn't to have been taken from them. Since his departure they haven't known which way to turn. I expect the wildest follies from them now ! "

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*Saturday, January 20, 1917.*

The Crown Prince Carol of Rumania and Bratiano, the President of the Council, have just arrived in Petrograd

The Minister for Foreign Affairs lost no time in receiving Bratiano. Their talk was exceedingly friendly. At the very outset, Bratiano told Pokrovski that he was determined to establish the alliance between Russia and Rumania on a permanent basis :

" The alliance must not be restricted to the present war," he said ; " I'm extremely anxious that it shall apply to the future too."

Prince Carol and Bratiano have been invited to dinner at Tsarskoïe-Selo to-morrow.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, January 21, 1917.*

The Emperor has told his aunt, the Grand Duchess Vladimir, that in their own interests, his cousins, the Grand Dukes Cyril and Andrew, should leave Petrograd for a few weeks.

The Grand Duke Cyril, who is a captain in the navy and in charge of the stores of the Guard, has "asked" to be sent on a tour of inspection to Archangel and Kola; the Grand Duke Andrew has a delicate chest, and is going to the Caucasus.

Sazonov has been appointed Ambassador in London, in the place of Count Benckendorff who died recently.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, January 23, 1917.*

I have dined at Tsarskoïe-Selo with the Grand Duke Paul's family party.

When we rose from table, the Grand Duke took me into a distant room so that we could talk as man to man. He made me the confidante of all his griefs and anxieties.

"The Emperor is more under the Empress's thumb than ever. She has succeeded in persuading him that the hostile movement against her—and it's beginning to be against *him*, unfortunately—is nothing but a conspiracy of the Grand Dukes and a drawing-room revolt. All this can only end with a tragedy . . . You know my belief in monarchy, and that to me the Emperor represents everything that is sacred. You must realize what I am suffering through what is happening, and is yet to happen."

From his emotion and the tone of his words I could see that he is terribly upset that his son Dimitri should have been involved in the prologue of the drama. He continued unprompted :

"Isn't it dreadful that, all over the Empire, candles

are being lit before the ikon of Saint Dimitri and my son is being styled *the liberator of Russia* ! ”

The notion that his son might be proclaimed Tsar at any time does not seem to have entered his head. He is what he has always been, a paragon of loyalty and chivalry.

He then told me that when he heard at Mohilev of Rasputin's murder, he immediately returned to Tsarskoïe-Selo.

When he arrived in the station late in the day of the 31st December, he found on the platform Princess Paley who told him that Dimitri had been arrested in his palace at Petrograd. He at once asked an audience of the Emperor, who consented to receive him at eleven o'clock the same evening, but “only for five minutes,” as he had a great deal to do.

On being ushered into his august nephew's presence, the Grand Duke Paul made a strong protest against the arrest of his son :

“No one has any right to arrest a Grand Duke without a formal order from you. Please have him released . . . Surely you're not afraid that he'll run away ? ”

The Emperor evaded any definite reply and put an end to the conversation.

Next morning the Grand Duke Paul went to Petrograd to see his son at the palace on the Névsky Prospekt. He asked him :

“Did you kill Rasputin ? ”

“No.”

“Are you prepared to swear it on the holy ikon of the Virgin and your mother's photograph ? ”

“Yes.”

The Grand Duke Paul then handed him an ikon of the Virgin and a photograph of the late Grand Duchess Alexandra :

“Now : swear that you didn't kill Rasputin.”

“I swear it.”

As he told me this incident, the Grand Duke made a really touching picture of nobility, truth and dignity. He ended with these words :

"I know nothing more of the tragedy ; I didn't want to know any more."

During the railway journey back to Petrograd I discussed what the Grand Duke had told me with Madame P——.

"I'm even more pessimistic than he," she exclaimed with flashing eyes. "The tragedy now on its way will be not only a dynastic crisis but a terrible revolution ; we can't escape it . . . Don't forget what I'm foretelling ; the disaster is at hand."

I then quoted her the terrible prophecy which the blindness of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette wrung from the lips of Mirabeau in September, 1789 : All is lost. The King and Queen will perish. The people will batter their corpses !

She replied :

"If we only had a Mirabeau !"

\* \* \*

*Thursday, January 25, 1917.*

The most devoted servants of tsarism, and even some of those who form the monarch's ordinary *entourage*, are beginning to be alarmed at the pace of events.

To take one example, I have just learned from a very reliable source that Admiral Nilov, A.D.C. General to the Emperor and one of his closest personal friends, quite recently had the courage to point out to him the whole peril of the situation ; he actually went so far as to beg him to send the Empress away—as being the only thing which could still save the empire and the dynasty. Nicholas II, who is chivalrous and worships his wife, rejected the suggestion with intense scorn :

"The Empress is a foreigner," he said ; "she has no one to protect her but myself. I shall never abandon her, under any circumstances. In any case, all the charges made against her are false. Wicked lies are being told about her. But I shall know how to make her respected !"

Admiral Nilov's intervention is particularly impressive because until quite recently he has always sided with the Empress. He was a close friend of Rasputin and intimately

associated with the gang ; he always arrived punctually for the famous Wednesday dinners at the house of the financier Manus and is therefore largely responsible for the discredit and disgrace into which the imperial court has now fallen. But at bottom, he is honest and patriotic. At long last he has seen the abyss which is opening at Russia's feet, and he is trying—too late—to clear his conscience.

\* \* \*

*Friday, January 26, 1917.*

Old Prince Kurakin, a master of necromancy, has had the satisfaction of raising the ghost of Rasputin the last few nights.

He immediately sent for Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, and Dobrovolski, the Minister of Justice ; they came at once. Since then, the three of them have been in secret conclave for hours every evening, listening to the dead man's solemn words.

What an extraordinary creature old Prince Kurakin is !

With his bowed frame, bald head, hook nose, pallid complexion, piercing and haggard eyes, hollow features, halting, sepulchral voice and sinister expression, he is the typical spiritualist.

At Count Witte's funeral two years ago, he was seen gazing fixedly for several minutes at the dead man's haughty features (the coffin being open in accordance with orthodox rites). Then the sepulchral voice was heard : " We'll compel you to come to us to-night ! "

\* \* \*

*Sunday, January 28, 1917.*

Madame T——, who was one of Rasputin's most fervent disciples and dabbles in the occult sciences, has been telling me of the relations between the Russian sovereigns and the famous French magician Papus, relations which date from as far back as 1900. Last November I recorded in this diary a spiritualistic *séance* at Tsarskoïe-Selo, at which this miracle worker presided in 1905.



"It is twelve years or so," said Madame T——, "since Papus was in Russia ; but he has kept up a correspondence with Their Majesties. Several times he tried to convince them that Rasputin's influence on them was evil, because he got it from the Devil. The result was that Father Grigori loathed Papus and when Their Majesties mentioned his name, he would burst out : "Why do you listen to that charlatan ? What's he poking his nose into now ? If he wasn't a low schemer, he'd have his hands full enough with all the evildoers and pharisees he has around him. There are more sins over there in the West than anywhere else in the world ; nowhere else is the crucified Jesus so continuously affronted. . . . How often have I told you that everything that comes out of *the Europes* is wicked and harmful !"

Madame T—— also tells me that she saw in the hands of Mademoiselle Golovin, the *staretz's* favourite, a letter which the Empress received from Papus some fifteen months ago. It ended thus : "From the cabalistic point of view, Rasputin is a vessel like unto Pandora's box, and contains all the vices, crimes and lusts of the Russian people. Should this vessel break, we shall immediately see these horrible contents spilled all over Russia." The Empress read this letter to Rasputin, who simply replied : "Why, I've told you that many a time. When I die, Russia will perish."

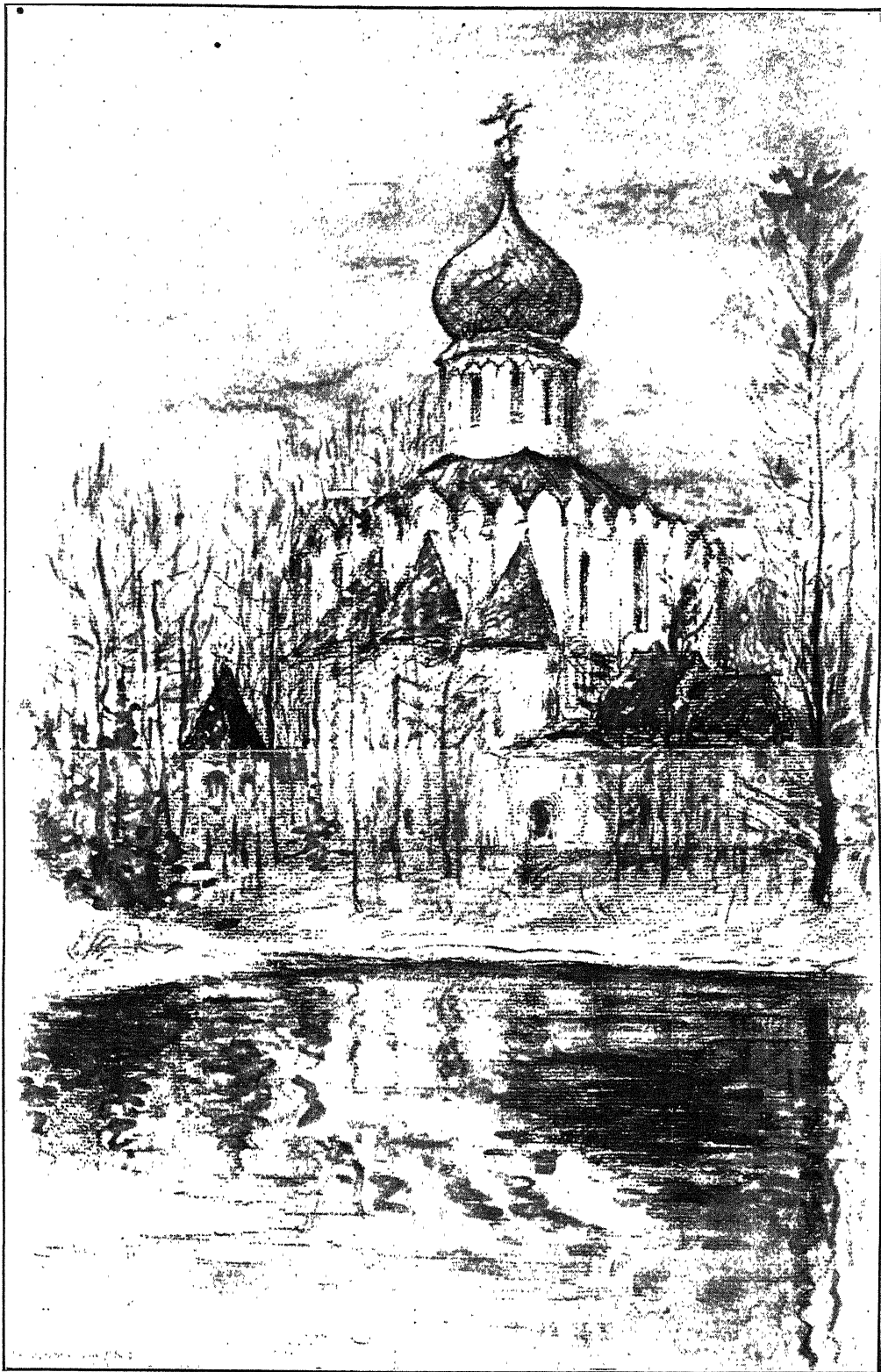
By way of completing the *staretz's* prophecies, Madame T—— told me that shortly before his death she heard him say : "I know I shall die amidst horrible sufferings. My corpse will be torn in pieces. But even if my ashes are scattered to the four winds, I shall go on performing miracles at my tomb. Through my prayers from above, the sick will recover and barren women will conceive."

I admit I have not the slightest doubt that sooner or later the memory of Rasputin will give rise to legends and his tomb will be prodigal with miracles.

## CHAPTER VII

JANUARY 29—FEBRUARY 21, 1917.







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JANUARY 29—FEBRUARY 21, 1917.

Allied conference at Petrograd: arrival of the French, British and Italian plenipotentiaries; the Government of the Republic sends a former President of the Council, Doumergue, and General de Castelnau.—The programme of the conference is too vague.—The plenipotentiaries presented to the Emperor; exchange of trivialities. Nicholas II's notion of his autocracy.—General Gourko acquaints the conference with the strategic intentions for 1917 of the High Command; great offensives to be postponed. Disappointment of the delegates.—The Emperor gives Doumergue a private audience; he consents to all the guarantees on the right bank of the Rhine which France may think it her duty to exact from Germany.—Banquet at Alexander Palace.—Slow progress of the conference: "We are wasting time." Deep impression made on the *moujiks* by Rasputin's murder; the first symptoms of legendary transfiguration.—End of the conference; poor results.—In my last conversation with Doumergue I beg him to tell the President of the Republic of my great anxiety about the internal situation in Russia.

*Monday, January 29, 1917.*

The French, British and Italian delegates to the allied conference arrived in Petrograd this morning.

It has only taken them three days to come from Port Romanov, and their train is the first to traverse the Murman coast-line from end to end.

Leaving General de Castelnau to the care of my military attaché, I took Doumergue to the Hotel de l'Europe.

He asked me about the internal situation in Russia. I painted it without sparing the darker colours, and drew the inference that it was necessary to hasten military events.

"On the Russian front," I said, "time is not working for us now. The public does not care about the war. All the government departments and the machinery of administration are getting hopelessly and progressively out of gear. The best minds are convinced that Russia is walking straight into the abyss. We must make haste."

"I didn't think the mischief had got so far."

"You'll be able to see for yourself." He then told me in confidence that the Government of the Republic is anxious to secure the Emperor's express promise that the peace treaty shall include a clause giving France full liberty to decide the fate of the territories on the left bank of the Rhine.

I reminded him that the question of the Rhine Provinces was settled between France and Russia long ago, at any rate so far as the "war map" made it possible.

"In November 1914 the Emperor told me on his own initiative that he unreservedly gave us the left bank of the Rhine; he said so again on the 13th March last year. What more could we want?"

"But Monsieur Briand thinks we ought to bind the Russian Government by a written and detailed record . . . We cannot be too careful in so serious a matter."

After a private luncheon at the embassy, I took Doumergue and General de Castelnau to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where the conference was to hold a preliminary and official sitting to lay the foundations for its work.

The following representatives were present:

*Russian:* Pokrovsky, Foreign Minister; the Grand Duke Sergei Michailovitch, Inspector-General of Artillery; M. Woynovski, Minister of Communications; M. Bark, Finance Minister; General Bielaïev, War Minister; General Gourko, Chief of Staff to the High Command; Admiral Grigorovitch, Minister for the Navy; M. Sazonov, who has just been appointed ambassador in London, and M. Neratov, assistant to the Minister for Foreign Affairs:

*French:* M. Doumergue, Minister for the Colonies; General de Castelnau and myself:

*English:* Lord Milner, minister without portfolio; Sir George Buchanan; Lord Revelstoke and General Sir Henry Wilson:

*Italian:* Signor Scialoja, minister without portfolio; the Marchese Carlotti and General Count Ruggieri.

At the very outset it appeared that the governments of the western Powers had only given their delegates

vague instructions ; no directing principle to co-ordinate the allied effort and no joint programme to hasten the common victory. After a prolonged exchange of generalities, the emptiness of which everyone felt, we modestly agreed to say that the recent conferences in Paris and Rome had sufficiently defined the object of the present meeting. We next decided that questions of a political nature should be examined by the chief delegates and ambassadors; plans of operations should be settled by the generals; a technical committee should look into questions of *matériel*, munitions, transport, etc. ; final decisions to be taken by the full conference.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, January 30, 1917.*

The Emperor will receive the members of the conference to-morrow ; the first official sitting has therefore been fixed for the day after to-morrow.

Official luncheon of forty covers at the embassy.

The afternoon was spent in drives and calls.

Bratiano, the President of the Rumanian Council, has postponed his departure from Petrograd ; he will participate officially in the labours of the conference whenever the interests of his country are involved.

At eight o'clock state banquet at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Prince Nicholas Golitzin, President of the Council, was present ; but simply as a silent figure-head. He carries the heavy burden of responsibility which has been thrust upon him with utter indifference and complete detachment. But so long as politics were not mentioned, his replies were courtesy itself.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, January 31, 1917.*

At eleven o'clock the Emperor received the members of the conference at the smaller palace at Tsarskoïe-Selo.

Court etiquette prescribes that ambassadors take precedence of their missions, so that the order of presentation is determined by their seniority.



The three delegations were thus arranged in a circle in the order : English—Italian—French.

The scene I was witnessing had an eloquence all its own.

The English mission comes first not only in virtue of Buchanan's seniority but in the matter of numbers also. It has two civil delegates, Lords Milner and Revelstoke, whereas the Italian and French missions have only one. Scialoja and Doumergue ; it also has six generals to show against the Italian and French two each. Still, from the military point of view, General de Castelnau indisputably gives us pre-eminence in moral and technical prestige : his brilliant services during this war, the glorious death of his three sons, the Christian stoicism of his submission to fate, the nobility of his character and his greatness of soul cast a kind of halo round his brows.

Buchanan and Carlotti presented their delegates in turn. Once more I noticed that the Emperor said hardly anything to the leaders, but gladly lingered to talk to guests of lower rank.

When my turn came, I presented Doumergue and heard the inevitable questions fall from the Emperor's lips :

"Have you had a pleasant journey ? I hope you are not too tired ? Is this your first visit to Russia ?"

With a few more or less meaningless remarks about the Alliance, war and victory, Doumergue made vain efforts to raise the tone of the conversation. Nicholas II cannot help liking him for his candour and friendly simplicity.

With General de Castelnau the Emperor was equally vague. He seemed to have no idea at all of his eminent services in France, and could not find a word to say about his three sons who were killed in battle.

After a few pleasant words to the junior officials and officers who form the *suite* of the French mission, Nicholas II withdrew, and the function was over.

As we were returning to Petrograd, I observed that Milner, Scialoja and Doumergue had been equally disappointed with the ceremony.

I could not help thinking to myself to what good use a monarch who really knew his business—someone like Ferdinand of Bulgaria—would have put such an event.

I can imagine the dexterous interplay of questions and insinuations, allusions and hints, confidences and compliments in which he would have revelled. But Nicholas II, as I have so often said, does not enjoy the exercise of power. If he jealously upholds his autocratic prerogatives, it is solely on mystical grounds. He never forgets that he has received his power from God Himself, and is always reminding himself that he will have to account for it in the valley of Josaphat. This notion of his sovereign function is the exact opposite of that which inspired Napoleon's famous remark to Rœderer: "I myself love power; but I love it with an artist's love; I love it as a musician loves his violin, something from which to draw sounds, chords and harmonies!" Conscience, humanity, gentleness, honour—these, I think, are the outstanding virtues of Nicholas II. But the sacred spark is not in him.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, February 1, 1917.*

I had Kokovtsov, Trepov, General Gourko, Doumergue and General de Castelnau to luncheon.

The talk was animated and candid, and for the occasion Kokovtsov put the mute on his only too well justified pessimism. Trepov spoke very frankly of the dangers of the internal crisis through which Russia is passing; but his speech, and perhaps even more his personality, exhale such an abundance of energy and authority that the evil seems easy to repair. General Gourko was even more impulsive than usual. Around me I could feel the bracing atmosphere which Doumergue and Castelnau have brought from France.

At three o'clock the conference met at the Marie Palace; we sat in the large rotunda room which looks out on Saint Isaac's Square.

Pokrovski presided; but his lack of experience in diplomatic affairs and his gentleness and modesty prevented him from steering the course of the discussion, which wandered aimlessly. There was talk about Greece, Japan,

Serbia, America, Rumania, the Scandinavian countries, and so on ; but all without logical sequence, dominating purpose or practical conclusions. Several times Lord Milner, who was next to me, whispered impatiently in my ear.

*"We are wasting time !"*

The President next called upon the Chief of Staff of the High Command to address the assembly.

In a booming and jerky voice, General Gourko read us a string of questions on the conduct of military operations which he desired to put to the conference.

The first question amazed us. It was couched in these terms : "Are the campaigns of 1917 to have a *decisive* character ? Or must we not abandon the hope of obtaining definitive results this year ?"

All the French, English and Italian delegates protested warmly that vigorous, co-ordinated offensives must be launched on the various fronts at the earliest possible moment.

General Gourko informs us, however, that the Russian army will not be in a position to undertake a great offensive until it has been reinforced by the sixty new divisions the creation of which has recently been arranged. It will take many months, perhaps even a year, to form and train these divisions, and equip them with all the *matériel* they require. Between now and then the Russian army can only undertake minor operations, though they will be enough to pin the enemy down on the Eastern front. .

The conference could not express an opinion on so grave a motive without the seasoned advice of the generals.

The other questions which General Gourko read to us were simply the corollary of the first, or else referred to technical problems, so the whole lot were sent for examination by the military committee.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, February 3, 1917.*

To-day the Emperor received the heads of the delegates to the conference in private audience.

Doumergue advocated the necessity of accelerating the general offensives with great warmth.

The Emperor replied :

"I entirely agree with you."

I should have preferred an acquiescence which was less unqualified, an answer which had more light and shade and was flavoured, if need be, with a note of objection.

Doumergue then broached the topic of the right bank of the Rhine. He judiciously developed all the political, military and economic aspects of that grave problem which so to speak dominates our whole national history, as it was raised between France and Germany as early as the time of Lothair, and we may profitably reflect even now on the famous "Partition Treaty," signed at Verdun in 843.

Invoking His Majesty's statements to me on November 21, 1914, and March 13, 1916, he explained that the government of the Republic had decided to include the following demands and guarantees in the terms of peace to be imposed on Germany :

(1) Alsace-Lorraine to be returned to France ; (2) its frontiers must extend at any rate to the limits of the ancient Duchy of Lorraine, in such a way as to incorporate the mining areas of that region in French territory ; (3) the other territories on the left bank of the Rhine will be completely separated from Germany ; (4) such of those territories as shall not be incorporated in French territory shall form an autonomous and neutralized state ; French troops shall be garrisoned there until the guarantees, imposed by the Allies to secure general peace, shall have been fulfilled.

Each of these points was examined in the greatest detail and Doumergue obtained the Emperor's unqualified assent.

Doumergue then said that the Allies should jointly agree in denying the Hohenzollerns the right to speak in the name of Germany when the time for negotiations arrives. This is an idea the Emperor has long cherished and mentioned to me several times ; he promised Doumergue to have the

matter examined from the historical and juridical points of view by his Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Something was then said about the future of the Alliance, the fraternal feelings which unite France and Russia now and for evermore, etc., and the audience came to a close.

At eight o'clock state banquet at Alexander Palace. As a matter of fact, the state part of it was displayed only in the liveries, lights and plate, for the menu was simplicity itself, a thoroughly *bourgeois* simplicity which contrasted forcibly with the ancient and far-famed splendour of the imperial cuisine, but was dictated by the ethical conventions of a time of war :

*Potage crème d'orge.*  
*Fruits glacés de Gatchina.*  
*Longe de veau Marengo.*  
*Poulets de grain rôtis.*  
*Salade de concombres.*  
*Glace maniarine.*

The Tsar looked as he does on his good days ; he feared, I am told, that the delegates would give him unwanted advice on internal politics ; he is now reassured on the point. The Tsarina is not well and remained in her room.

At table the Emperor had Buchanan on his right and Carlotti on his left. Count Fredericks, Minister of the Court, sat opposite His Majesty ; I was on his right and had Prince Nicholas Golitzin, President of the Council, on my right.

The old and excellent Count Fredericks, who is almost worn out by his years, told me how greatly he suffered from the press attacks and drawing-room epigrams which accuse him of being a German :

"To begin with," he said, "my family is of Swedish not German origin ; and besides it has been in the service of Russia for more than a century, in fact since the reign of Catherine the Great !"

The truth is that his family hailed from Swedish Pomerania and has supplied Russian autocracy with a long line of docile retainers. He is thus a very typical representative of the caste of "Baltic Barons" which have

governed Russia since the reign of Anna Ivanovna, men who are all absolutely devoted to their sovereigns but have little in common with the Russian spirit. Nearly all of them have relations in the military or civil service of Germany. With them, their attachment to the Romanov dynasty is not merely a family tradition and obligation : it is their very *raison d'être*.

So I was not exactly surprised at the naive suggestion Count Fredericks put forward over dessert :

"The conference must agree together that after the war the Allies shall come to each other's aid in case of internal disorders. We are all interested in fighting revolution !"

He is back in the days of the Holy Alliance ; only a century behind the times. *O sancta et senilis simplicitas !*

Dinner ended at last and we went into the next room where coffee was served.

The Emperor lit a cigarette and passed from group to group. Lord Milner, Scialoja, Doumergue, General de Castelnau, Lord Revelstoke, General Ruggieri, General Wilson and the three ambassadors all had a kind word from him, but nothing more ; he did not linger to talk to anyone.

While these dull conversations were in progress, the Empress received the chief delegates in turn in her room. She was particularly gracious to Doumergue and remarked at the conclusion of their talk : "Prussia must be punished !"

Shortly before ten, Nicholas II returned to the centre of the room and with the kindest of smiles took leave of the company.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, February 4, 1917.*

On the 1st February Germany decided to extend the strict application of the maritime blockade to the whole coast-line of Europe. The act is a ruthless cancellation of the solemn assurances which America obtained from the

German Chancellor that naval warfare should be restricted after the *Lusitania*, *Ancona* and *Sussex* had been torpedoed.

The reply of the Federal Government has been prompt. Yesterday, President Wilson asked the Senate for authority to employ any means which may become necessary to protect American ships and citizens in the exercise of their peaceful activities. He concluded with a noble declaration that "we are not thinking only of defending our material interests ; we also desire to defend the fundamental rights of humanity, without which there can be no civilization."

With the approval of the Senate, Gerard, the American Ambassador in Berlin, has been immediately recalled.

The Russian public has favourably received this important piece of news, but the impression it conveys is but vague and superficial. For Russia knows nothing of America ; she does not even suspect what a great drama has been taking place in the conscience of the American people during the last twenty months.

\* \* \*

*Monday, February 5, 1917.*

My luncheon party was made up of Doumergue, Rodzianko (President of the Duma), Bratiano, several members of the Council of Empire, including Count Alexis Bobrinsky and Michael Stakhovitch, the financier Putilov, etc.

With the exception of Putilov, who remained wrapped in a significant silence, all my Russian guests professed an optimism which they were very far from feeling only a few days ago. As a matter of fact, the same current of optimism has been travelling through Petrograd society ever since the arrival of the foreign delegates. But alas ! the moment they leave, the barometer will fall to its lowest point again. No nation is so easily influenced or so sensitive as the Russian.

Bratiano bears the misfortunes of his country and his

crushing load of personal responsibility with high-souled resolution. Adversity has made him greater.

This evening there was a formal dinner of a hundred and fifty covers at the Military Club. The first qualification of him who would take part in a diplomatic conference is to have a good digestion. As we came away, I repeated to Lord Milner the remark he made the other day :

*"We are wasting time!"*

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, February 7, 1917.*

The work of the conference is dragging on to no purpose. No practical result has emerged from all the diplomatic verbiage. To take one example, we are trying to find a formula asking Japan to accelerate her assistance!

The technical munitions and transport committee alone is doing anything useful, but the requirements of the Russian General Staff exceed anything we had anticipated and its demands even exceed its requirements. To my way of thinking, it is not so much a matter of knowing what Russia needs as of ascertaining what she is capable of putting to good use. What point is there in sending her guns, machine-guns, shells and aeroplanes, which would be so valuable to us, if she has neither the means of getting them to the front nor the will to take advantage of them?

There is a perfect understanding between General de Castelnau and General Gourko. General de Castelnau insists that the Russian offensive must be launched about the 15th April, so that it will synchronize with the French offensive; but General Gourko does not think it possible to embark on an operation on any great scale before the 15th May! . . .

\* \* \*

*Thursday, February 8, 1917.*

I have been trying to give Doumergue the fullest



possible insight into the Russian world by introducing him to men who can be regarded as the most representative. This morning I invited certain people to meet him at my table: General Polivanov and the great mathematician Vassiliev, both liberal members of the Council of Empire, Miliukov, Maklakov and Shingarev, leaders of the "Cadet" Party in the Duma.

The conversation, which was quite unrestricted and very animated, was mainly on the subject of internal politics.

At one moment, Doumergue thought that my guests were a little too impulsive, a shade too eager to take the field against tsarism, and was advocating patience.

At the very mention of the word "patience," Miliukov and Maklakov burst out:

"We've had quite enough patience! . . . Our patience is utterly exhausted! Besides, if we don't act soon, the masses won't listen to us any longer."

Maklakov went on to remind us of Mirabeau's remark: "Beware of asking for time! Disaster never gives it!"

Doumergue continued, very wisely:

"I'm talking about patience, not resignation. I realize your anxieties and annoyances, and the extreme difficulty of your position. But whatever you do, put the war first!"

I noticed that Maklakov, who is a native of Moscow, deputy for that city, and the typical Muscovite, never says "Petrograd," but always "Petersburg"; I asked him why.

"Because 'Petersburg' is its real name; it's a German city and has no claim to a Slav name. I'll call it 'Petrograd' when it deserves it."

\* \* \*

*Friday, February 9, 1917.*

Prince O—— has just come from Kostrovna, where he has large farming and manufacturing interests. The old city of Kostrovna, which rises on the left bank of the Volga

between Yaroslavl and Nijny-Novgorod, is rich in memories. In ancient days it was the refuge and citadel of the Romanovs, and in the famous monastery of Saint Ipatiev it preserves the remains of the heroic peasant Sussianin, whose story is commemorated in *Life for the Tsar*. It is one of the provinces of the Empire where dynastic loyalty is most intense and the hereditary tendencies, social habits and national sentiments of the Russian people are preserved in all their integrity. I am therefore somewhat anxious to know the state of public feeling in that region. I could not possibly have found a better source of information than Prince O—, as he is splendid at talking to *moujiks*. In reply to my questions he said :

“ Things are going badly ! They’re tired of the war ; they don’t understand anything about it now except that victory is impossible. And yet they haven’t clamoured for peace so far. I’ve seen a melancholy and resigned discontent in all quarters. Rasputin’s murder has made a vivid impression on the masses.”

“ Oh ! What sort of an impression ? ”

“ It’s a very curious phenomenon and thoroughly Russian. To the *moujiks* Rasputin has become a martyr. He was a man of the people ; he let the Tsar hear the voice of the people ; he defended the people against the Court folk, the *pridvorny*. So the *pridvorny* killed him ! That’s what’s being said in all the *isbas*.”

“ But the public in Petrograd was overjoyed when Grishka’s death became known ! Why, people rushed to the churches to light candles at the ikon of Saint Dimitri because they then thought that it was the Grand Duke Dimitri who had killed *the dog*.”

“ In Petrograd men knew all about Rasputin’s orgies, and to gloat over his death was one way of showing hostility to the Emperor and Empress. But I have an idea that, speaking generally, all the *moujiks* of Russia think the same as those of Kostrovna . . . ”

So the process of transforming Rasputin into a hero of legend has already begun in the mind of the Russian nation.

*Saturday, February 10, 1917.*

Bratiano left Petrograd this evening and is returning straight to Jassy.

When he came to say good-bye to me, I found him in a state of mind which does him credit ; in other words, calm, grieved and resolute. No futile recriminations and no attempt at self-justification. He sees and judges the situation as a practical man should. He said he was very satisfied with the numerous conversations he has had with the Emperor's ministers and the members of the inter-allied conference. He is particularly pleased at the confident and cordial attention General Gourko has shown him : he is too shrewd not to have discovered that the whole policy of Russia towards Rumania is now determined directly by the Russian High Command and he has very cleverly established the closest touch with the Chief of the General Staff. Yet I cannot find that in his conferences with General Gourko any practical conclusion has been reached on the two points which are exceedingly urgent at the present moment—the supply of food to the civil population of Moldavia and the resumption of operations in the northern Carpathians and the Danube region.

I am told that during his visit to Petrograd, Bratiano has sounded the Emperor as to his ultimate consent to the marriage of the Grand Duchess Olga to Prince Carol, the presumptive heir. The idea of this union has been mooted several times before. The Emperor's answer was quite encouraging : "I shall have no objection to the marriage if my daughter and Prince Carol find they suit each other."

\* \* \*

*Sunday, February 11, 1917.*

Skvortsov, an important official of the Holy Synod and editor of the religious journal, *Kolokol*, has confirmed what Prince O—— told me the day before yesterday about

the impression which the Rasputin murder has made on the rural masses :

"The peasants," he said, "have been greatly moved by it ; Grigori was a *moujik*, one of themselves, and they thought it quite natural that the imperial palace should be open to him. Their explanation of the crime is therefore a simple one : the enemies of the people killed the *staretz* because he pleaded the people's cause before the Tsar. The impressions of the higher social classes, my clerical *clientèle* and the merchants and officials, *pomieshtchiks*, are no better : the Rasputin murder is considered as an evil omen. You know how superstitious we Russians are. All I can tell you is that everyone is hawking round the prophecy which Grigori often uttered to Their Majesties : *If I die or you desert me, you will lose your son and your crown within six months.*"

"Did he really prophesy that ? "

"Yes, indeed, Ambassador ! I've heard him say so myself a score of times and more ! Only a few days before his death, he repeated it to His Eminence the Metropolitan Pitirim."

\* \* \*

*Monday, February 12, 1917.*

Taking advantage of the fact that the generals have gone on a tour of inspection to the Galician front, the civil delegates to the conference have paid a visit to Moscow.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, February 13, 1917.*

Eleven workmen, members of the Central Committee of Military Industries, have just been arrested on a charge of "plotting a revolutionary movement with the object of proclaiming a republic."

Arrests of this kind are common enough in Russia, but in the ordinary way the public hears nothing about them. After a secret trial, the accused are sent to a state gaol or

banished to the depths of Siberia. The press never mentions the matter, and quite frequently even their families do not know what has happened to their missing relative. The silence in which these summary convictions are wrapped has a good deal to do with the tragic notoriety of the *Okhrana*. But this time the element of mystery has been dispensed with. A sensational *communiqué* informs the press of the arrest of the twelve workmen. This is Protopopov's way of showing how busy he is in saving tsarism and society.

\* \* \*

Wednesday, February 14, 1917.

Acting on instructions received from Briand, I have just sent the following letter to Pokrovski :

*I have the honour to inform the Imperial Government that the Government of the Republic is proposing to incorporate the following territorial claims and guarantees in the terms of peace to be imposed on Germany :*

(1) *Alsace-Lorraine shall be returned to France ; (2) its frontiers shall extend at the least to the limits of the former Duchy of Lorraine ; they will be drawn in such a way as to provide for strategic necessities and include the whole of the coal basin in the valley of the Sarre in French territory ; (3) the other territories on the left bank of the Rhine, which are now incorporated in the German Empire, shall be completely severed from Germany and liberated from any political and economic dependence upon her ; (4) the territories on the left bank of the Rhine which are not incorporated in French territory shall form an autonomous and neutralized State ; they will be occupied by French troops until the enemy States shall have completely carried out all the terms and guarantees stipulated for in the peace treaty.*

*The Government of the Republic will therefore be glad to be able to count on the support of the Imperial Government in realizing its projects.*

Pokrovski immediately replied that *the Government of the Republic may count on the support of the Imperial Government in realizing its projects.*

\* \* \*

*Friday, February 16, 1917.*

The Rasputin party has survived Rasputin, but it is a body without a head. Though still very powerful from the political point of view, it has already lost much of its influence from the religious point of view, and the control of ecclesiastical affairs threatens to slip from its hands altogether before long.

With a view to recovering the leadership of the party, Raïev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, has just despatched Monsignor Basil, the Bishop of Tchernigov and the fine flower of Rasputinism, to Petrograd. This prelate's mission will be to arrange with the Minister of the Interior to organize a moral propaganda service ; in other words, police *surveillance* of the clergy.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, February 17, 1917.*

One of the sights which has made the greatest impression on the members of the three allied missions since their arrival in Russia—and particularly during their excursion to Moscow—is the amount of traffic on the snow. The animated picture which both town and country offer in that respect has surprised them all.

In Western countries the snow never lies deep or for long at a time, and is simply an obstacle to movement ; it blocks the streets and makes vehicular traffic difficult ; often enough, it actually paralyses economic activity.

In Russia it is quite otherwise. In spring thaws transform the Russian plain into a vast swamp which stretches from the Black Sea to the Baltic. In certain regions, such as that of the Pripet and middle Dnieper the mud lies five and six feet deep. But as soon as summer begins to warm the earth, the roads, which are not metalled,

become quagmires and gullies with the slightest traffic ; before long most of the highways are nothing but tracks, furrowed with ruts and a mass of holes. Towards the middle of September the ground becomes soft again and is transformed into a sticky mass once more. Under the autumn rains the boundless plain reverts to its character as a vast slough ; villages are cut off from communication with each other ; the railway stations, congested with goods, cannot distribute them to the surrounding districts. Then winter comes. The snow falls in heavy flakes ; it accumulates, settles, hardens and lays a firm, flat carpet over the ground. Traffic by sleigh is organized at once. Everywhere life reawakens, and movement begins again over the infinite, white spaces.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, February 18, 1917.*

General Berthelot, who is in command of the French Military Mission in Rumania, has just arrived in Petrograd to confer with General de Castelnau and General Gourko.

For the last four months it is General Berthelot who in practice has been directing the operations and reorganization of the Rumanian army. In the most thankless and desperate situations, he has impressed everyone by his prudent and methodical work, his calculated reasoning, his unshaken and infectious confidence and unruffled and ruthless energy. When Rumania emerges from her present trials, he will have been one of the best agents of her resurrection.

\* \* \*

*Monday, February 19, 1917.*

I gave a lunch to-day in honour of General Berthelot ; my guests were Doumergue, Pokrovski, Bark, General de Castelnau, Neratov, General Bielaïev, Polovtsov, General Yanin, etc.

On rising from table, Doumergue, Pokrovski, Bielaïev, Castelnau, Berthelot, Janin and I discussed the critical

situation of Rumania. The impenetrable reserve behind which Pokrovski and Bielaïev took shelter confirms the impression left upon me by my last talk with Bratiano, an impression that the Russian High Command has now taken sole charge of Rumanian affairs and is anxious to keep the other allied Powers out of the business.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, February 20, 1917.*

Doumergue and General de Castelnau lunched at the embassy very privately to-day.

We conjured up memories of the days just before the war. Doumergue, then President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, was one of the first who saw, or rather confessed himself obliged to see, the threatening reality.

I reminded General de Castelnau of a very serious talk we had on the 26th November, 1913. At that time he was Deputy Chief of the General Staff. We had just been to a sitting of the Advisory Committee of the Superior Council of National Defence, of which I was a member in my capacity of director of political affairs. General Joffre had presided. When all the other members had left the room, I asked General Joffre and General de Castelnau to stay behind with me. Then I told them of the conversation the Emperor of Germany had had with the King of the Belgians a few days before, a conversation in which William II had solemnly said that he considered war was henceforth "inevitable and necessary." General Joffre listened to me in silence. When I had finished, his eyes lit up with a sinister glow; he raised his head; took a deep breath. Then he let his massive hand fall on Castelnau's shoulder and said in a calm and steady voice: "It'll have to come this time, *mon vieux* !"

After luncheon, I questioned General de Castelnau about his impressions of his visit to the front and the value of the assistance we may expect from Russia.

"The *morale* of the men seemed to me excellent," he said, "the men are strong, high-spirited and full of



courage ; there is a frank, gentle look in their eyes which augurs well. But the High Command is badly organized ; armament is totally inadequate and the transport service very defective. What is perhaps even more serious is the poor quality of the tactical instruction. They have not broken away from out-of-date methods ; the Russian army is a year behind our armies in the West. It is incapable of carrying through an offensive on a large scale."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, February 21, 1917.*

After an interminable series of luncheons, dinners and receptions at the embassy, the Finance Ministry, the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce, the President of the Council's residence, the Town Council, the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna's palace, the Yacht Club, etc., the foreign delegates are now returning westwards, via the ice-bound Arctic Ocean.

The results of this conference, which has been the subject of so much mystery—and likewise so much talk—are very poor. We have exchanged views about the blockade of Greece, the inadequacy of Japan's help, the prospective value of intervention by America, the critical position of Rumania and the necessity of closer and more practical allied co-operation ; we have ascertained the colossal requirements of the Russian army in *matériel* and made joint arrangements to provide for them as soon as possible. That is all.

When Doumergue and General de Castelnau came to bid me good-bye, I gave them a message to take :

" Please tell the President of the Republic and the President of the Council that you have left me very anxious. A revolutionary crisis is at hand in Russia ; it nearly broke out five weeks ago and is only postponed. Every day the Russian nation is getting more indifferent towards the war and the spirit of anarchy is spreading among all classes and even in the army. About the end of last October a very significant incident occurred in

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Petrograd ; I reported it to Monsieur Briand. A strike broke out in the Viborg quarter and as the police were very roughly handled by the workmen, two regiments which were in barracks in the vicinity were sent for. These two regiments fired on the police. A division of Cossacks had to be hastily called in to bring the mutineers to their senses. So in case of a rising the authorities cannot count on the army. My conclusion is that time is no longer working for us, at any rate in Russia, and that we must henceforth take the defection of our ally into our calculations and draw all the inferences involved."

"I am just as pessimistic as yourself," replied Doumergue ; "I shall certainly tell the President of the Republic and M. Briand all you say, and will confirm it myself."



## CHAPTER VIII

FEBRUARY 22—MARCH 11, 1917.



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FEBRUARY 22—MARCH 11, 1917.

Tchadaïev's prophecy.—The Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna goes to the Caucasus; she tells me her fears of the approaching crisis.—The functions of tsarism in the political and social life of the Russian people. An imaginary hypothesis: the Gunpowder Plot.—A retrospective survey of the origins of the Russo-Japanese War: the Emperor William's duplicity.—Cruel sufferings of the Rumanian civil population and army in Moldavia; famine and typhus. Noble behaviour of the King, Queen and Bratiano.—Paradoxes in the Russian character: meekness and revolt.—The military operations in Rumania and the problem of Constantinople.—The effect of war on the morals of the *moujik*; a bishop's complaints to the Empress.—Disturbances in Petrograd: "Bread and peace!" The ministers hold a special council. "Perhaps this is the last social function of the *régime*." A warning to the demonstrators: a Guard regiment refuses to fire on the mob.

*Thursday, February 22, 1917.*

I have just been reading the letters of Tchadaïev, a paradox-loving and discerning author, the ironical enemy of Slav particularism and the great and inspired philosopher who thundered his eloquent prophecies at the Russian people in or about the year 1840. I have incidentally noted the following profound observation:

"The Russians are one of those nations which seem to exist only to give humanity terrible lessons. Of a certainty these lessons will not be wasted. But who can foretell the sufferings and trials in store for Russia before she returns to the normal course of her destiny and her place in the bosom of humanity?"

\* \* \*

*Friday, February 23, 1917.*

The foreign delegates have hardly left Petrograd before the horizon of the Neva is darkening anew.

The Imperial Duma is to resume its labours on Tuesday next, the 27th February, and the fact is causing excitement

in industrial quarters. To-day, various agitators have been visiting the Putilov works, the Baltic Yards and the Viborg quarter, preaching a general strike as a protest against the government, food-shortage and war.

The agitation has been lively enough to induce General Kharbalov, Military Governor of the capital, to issue a notice prohibiting public meetings and informing the civil population that "all resistance to authority will be immediately put down by force of arms."

This evening I gave a dinner to the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna and her son, the Grand Duke Boris. My other guests were Sazonov, Shebeko, the former ambassador to Vienna, Princess Marie Troubetzkoï, Princess Bielosselsky, Prince and Princess Michael Gortchakov, Princess Stanilas Radziwill, M. and Madame Polovtsov, Count and Countess Alexander Shuvalov, Count and Countess Joseph Potocki, Princess Gagarin, M. Poklevski, Madame Vera Narishkin, Count Adam Zamojski, Benckendorff, General Knorring and my staff.

The Grand Duchess was at the head of my table. I was on her left and Sazonov on her right. The Grand Duke sat opposite her; on his right was the Vicomtesse du Halgouët, wife of my secretary who acts as hostess, and on his left Princess Marie Troubetzkoï.

During dinner, my conversation with the Grand Duchess was purely small-talk and her conversation with Sazonov was of the same character.

But when we returned to the drawing-room, she asked me to sit by her, and we talked more freely. With an air of the deepest dejection she told me that she is leaving the day after to-morrow for Kislovotsk, on the northern slopes of the Caucasus :

"I badly need sun and a rest," she said. "The emotions of recent times have worn me out. I'm leaving with my heart heavy with apprehension. What will have happened by the time I see you again ? Things can't go on like this !"

"So affairs are not improving ?"

"No. How could they ? The Empress has the Emperor entirely under her thumb ; her only adviser is Protopopov

who consults the ghost of Rasputin every night ! I can't tell you how downhearted I feel. Everything seems black, wherever I look. I'm expecting the most dire catastrophes. And yet God can't mean Russia to perish ! ”

“ God only helps those who help themselves ; I have never heard of Him preventing a suicide. And what the Emperor is now doing is simply suicide, suicide for himself, his dynasty and his people.”

“ But what can we do ? ”

“ Fight on. The recent intervention by the Grand Dukes has failed : we must try again, but on broader grounds and, permit me to add, in a more serious and prudent, and less censorious spirit. Both the Right and Left sections of the Council of Empire and the Duma contain elements well qualified to organize resistance to the abuses of autocracy. I believe that Protopopov, Dobrovolsky and all the rest of the Empress's *camarilla* would soon crumble into dust if all the reasonable and patriotic men in these two assemblies made common cause for the sake of national salvation and undertook to show the Emperor, firmly and logically, but with due moderation, that he is leading Russia straight to disaster ; if the imperial family combined to speak with one voice while carefully avoiding the slightest suspicion of intrigue or conspiracy, and if you thus succeeded in creating in the upper strata of the State an all-embracing concentration on national revival. But there is no time to lose ! The danger is pressing ; every hour counts. If salvation does not come from above, there will be revolution from below. And that will mean catastrophe ! ”

Her only answer was a despairing sigh. Then she remembered her royal duties, in the performance of which she has no superior, and asked some of the ladies to come and talk to her . . .

\* \* \*

*Saturday, February 24, 1917.*

The Marchese Carlotti, my Italian colleague, has just been comparing notes with me on the results of the



conference. The course of our conversation led us to discuss the internal situation.

Without minimizing the gravity of the symptoms that come under our observation every day, Carlotti does not think that a revolution is imminent. In any case, he presumes that if the tsarist monarchy were overthrown by a popular rising, it would be immediately replaced by a constitutional and democratic *régime*, in accordance with the programme of the "Cadet" Party; with the exception of a little bloodshed at the start, the new order would find no great obstacles to its inception. He argued this point of view with the ingenious subtlety of the Italian character which, in a political crisis, at once perceives all the possible combinations and desirable solutions.

I argued *contra*, that the abolition of tsarism would probably inaugurate an unlimited period of disorder such as that which followed the death of Ivan the Terrible; tsarism, I said, is not only the official form of Russian government; it is the very foundation, tie-beam and structure of the Russian community. It is tsarism which has made the historic individuality of Russia and still preserves it. The whole collective life of the Russian nation is so to speak summed up in tsarism. Outside tsarism there is nothing. To bring home to Carlotti what I meant by assertions so dogmatic, I had recourse to an imaginary comparison which has often occurred to me of late :

"You remember the famous Gunpowder Plot in the reign of James I of England, in 1605: a number of conspirators mined Westminster Palace with the idea of blowing up the sovereign, the ministers and all the members of Parliament at one and the same time. Suppose that at the present time a few English anarchists, using some highly improbable explosive, succeeded in annihilating at one blow King, Ministers, House of Lords, House of Commons, all government departments, police, armed forces and courts of law; in a word, all the machinery of the British constitution. Anyone can see there would be instant and general confusion in the State and a sudden

cessation of almost all its vital functions. But it would only be a case of syncope. After a short period of paralysis and amazement, you would see public life revived and reorganized by the spontaneous action of provincial and municipal institutions, ecclesiastical bodies, the Universities, clubs, chambers of commerce, corporations and those innumerable private associations—religious, political, charitable, philanthropic, literary, scientific and sporting—which swarm on English soil and co-ordinate to a certain extent the free play of individual initiative. Such an exhibition of automatic reconstruction is impossible to imagine in a country like Russia, where no manifestation of political or social activity escapes the interference, supervision or strangling grip of the central authority, and the whole life of the nation is the slave of an omnipotent bureaucracy . . . My conclusion is that if tsarism collapsed, it would bring the whole Russian edifice down with it in its fall. I even wonder whether national unity would survive; for by what force, or in virtue of what principle could the belt of subject races be kept in place which the traditional policy of the tsars has girt about the Muscovite State? Would it not mean the end of Russia?"

\* \* \*

*Sunday, February 25, 1917.*

Pokrovski and I have been academically discussing the origins of the war, the action of the collective forces and individual intentions which had long made war inevitable, the terrible responsibility which History will certainly assign to Germany, and so on. While thus investigating first causes, we came to mention the Russo-Japanese War and I alluded to the double game which William II played towards Russia at that time. Pokrovski interrupted:

"As we are on this subject, I should like to ask you a question which will demonstrate once more how little I know about diplomatic affairs. Is it true that in 1904 the Kaiser was urging Japan to attack us while simultaneously inciting *us* on to make no concessions?"

“Absolutely true. To see what advice and encouragement Germany gave Russia at that time, you have only to examine your archives or, better still, study the report of your excellent colleague, Neratov. There is no doubt that from 1897 onward the Emperor William was always dangling before your eyes the vision of the Far East ; it was he who suggested the seizure of Port Arthur to you. He paraded before you the spectre of the ‘ Yellow Peril ’ and denounced the monstrous selfishness of France in trying to keep you out of Asiatic adventures. In the following years he was always complimenting you on your work in Manchuria. The moment you had any difficulty with Japan, he gave you secret assurances that if the ‘ dirty little yellows ’ became too bold, the German fleet would go to the help of yours in the China Seas. Towards the end of 1903, while France was exerting herself to procure you an honourable outcome of the Yalu affair, he made the Tsar a solemn promise to keep the peace in Europe while your armies were away fighting in the Far East. Until the Mukden defeat, he never ceased exhorting you to continue the war, increase your effectives and throw the whole of your national resources into that disastrous struggle. Such was his attitude towards Russia . . . But the Kaiser might conceivably say : ‘ Admitted that the advice I gave Russia was bad, all she had to do was not to take it. You reproach me with having encouraged her to involve herself in the Far East with the secret desire of seeing her weakened in Europe. All that is only policy, and good policy : I have furthered German interests . . . ’ So I should not pass too severe a judgment on his behaviour towards you if it were not for something else. The fact is that while he was fooling and mystifying you, he was secretly encouraging the restiveness of Japan ; he was inciting her to attack you and saying to her : ‘ In a duel with Russia you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Your friend England will never allow you to be crushed. France will abandon her ally. My personal contribution will be to promise you neutrality, a benevolent neutrality ! ’ On the 8th February, 1904, without the slightest warning, Japanese destroyers sank three of your

largest cruisers off Port Arthur. To excuse behaviour such as that, the Kaiser cannot plead the traditional processes of political calculation. It was pure deceit, knavery and double-dealing on his part."

Pokrovski sat dumbfounded, then flung up his arms :

"Do you mean to say that machiavellianism such as that is possible in the twentieth century! *The twentieth century!*"

"Yes, even in the twentieth century. But what does the century matter? Machiavelianism was several thousand years old when machiaveli invented it. I don't suppose the events of the present war have exactly persuaded you that the world grows wiser as it gets older. The future will always be the product of the past."

"Then I'm sorry for humanity! *Gospodi pomiloui* . . . But is what you've just been telling me absolutely true and authentic? And how do you know, if it's not indiscreet to ask?"

"The Japanese Government was immensely surprised by Germany's encouragement; it immediately informed the British Government which at once recognized the scheming and mischief-making brain of the Emperor William.

"Shortly afterwards the war-party got the upper hand at Tokio. I heard all this in 1913 from the British Ambassador in Paris, Sir Francis Bertie, who was Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office in 1903."

\* \* \*

*Monday, February 26, 1917.*

The food situation in Moldavia is getting worse every day: the Rumanian army is rationed below subsistence level and the civil population is dying of starvation. The natural result of physical distress has been a shocking epidemic of typhus.

General Berthelot maintains that the sole remedy is an offensive north of the Dobrudja, carried out in such a way as to free one arm of the Danube and thus open a

fresh line of supply. General Gourko, however, refuses to undertake this offensive, which he regards as extremely dangerous and in any case does not fit in with his strategic plans.

In this national trial—one of the most cruel which has overtaken any country—King Ferdinand, Queen Marie and Bratiano are real shining lights. All the evidence we are getting from Jassy agrees on that point. By his calm and fearless energy, the King is keeping up the nation's courage and rallying everyone to the defence of the flag; gravely and without any sort of affectation, he is carrying out his professional duties splendidly as sovereign and leader. Bratiano shows the same strength of character and calm and deliberate fortitude; he, too, is facing the necessary sacrifices in the same manly way. In the case of the Queen on the other hand, patriotism is taking the heroic form; there is a fiery and warm-hearted ardour about her, an enthusiastic and chivalrous ardour, something of the sacred flame. So she has already become a figure of legend, for her proud and winning loveliness is the very incarnation of the soul of her people.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, February 28, 1917.*

From whatever point of view the Russian be regarded, whether political, intellectual, moral or religious, he always presents the paradoxical spectacle of extreme docility combined with a spirit of revolt which is very strongly marked.

The *moujik* is famed for his endurance and fatalism, his gentleness and meekness; his tenderness and resignation often border on the sublime. But all at once you will see him assert himself and rebel. His blind rage immediately impels him to the most shocking crimes, ferocious acts of vengeance and paroxysms of wickedness and savagery.

There is the same contrast in the religious sphere. All who study the history and theology of the Russian

Orthodox Church, "the True Church of Christ," realize that its essential characteristics are its conservative instincts, the immutable rigidity of its creed, reverence for canon law, the importance of forms and rites, routine devotions, sumptuous ceremonial, an imposing hierarchy and humble, blind submission on the part of the faithful. By way of contrast, the great sect of the *Raskol* which separated from the official Church in the XVIIth century and has no less than eleven million adherents, shows us the abolition of priesthood, a primitive rough-and-ready form of worship and a negative and subversive radicalism. The innumerable sects which the *Raskol* produced in its turn, sects such as the *Khlisty*, *Dukhobors*, *Stranniky*, *Pomortsi*, *Duchitely*, *Molokanes* and *Skoptzy*, have gone very much further. With them there is no limit to individualism, no organization or discipline, unbridled licence, all the freaks and aberrations of religious emotion ; in fact absolute anarchy.

These two sides of the Russian nature appear equally well in the sphere of morals and private life. I know no country where the social fact is so impregnated with the spirit of tradition and religion ; domestic life so solemn, patriarchal, inspired by so much tenderness and affection, enveloped in so much poetry and reverence. Nowhere are family duties and responsibilities accepted more readily ; the irksomeness and privations, distresses and adversities of daily life borne with more patience.

On the other hand, in no other country are individual revolts more frequent and sudden, and nowhere do they create such a sensation. On this point the records of crimes of passion and fashionable scandals abound in startling examples. There is no excess of which Russians, whether men or women, are not capable, the moment they have decided to "assert themselves as free beings."

\* \* \*

Thursday, March 1, 1917.

In spite of my repeated appeals, General Gourko has peremptorily refused to launch an offensive north of the

Dobrudja with a view to creating a new line of supply for Rumania. There is undoubted force in his technical objections, but his real reason is one he does not mention, though General Polivanov gave me a hint of it not long ago.

The Russian High Command attaches but slight importance to any operations of which Rumania might become the theatre; it intends to maintain a strict defensive there, its sole strategic object being to keep the enemy away from Kiev and Odessa. It has no illusions whatever about the possibility of clearing the way to Constantinople by forcing the Danube and the Balkans. It regards a march on Constantinople as necessarily postponed to the very end of the war, when an exhausted Germany will leave Turkey to her fate. Then and only then will a Russian army undertake the conquest of Constantinople: its point of departure will not be the Danube, or Sinope, or Heraclea, but the western shore of the Black Sea, Midia, Cape Inadia, or perhaps even Burgas if the military and political situation in Bulgaria makes it possible.

As I was telling Pokrovski of my annoyance at General Gourko's refusal, he replied with some warmth:

"I assure you that we are doing and shall continue to do everything possible to save Rumania. But we must wait for a favourable moment! And that means a long time, no doubt! I know that at Jassy the Rumanians are saying nasty things about us, and even accusing us of treachery. I can forgive them, because they're in a very wretched state. But the honesty of our conduct is sufficiently proved by the fact that our Moldavian army is no less than five hundred thousand strong with a colossal amount of equipment. Bratiano should realize that most of the present troubles are due to this vast accumulation, for which he himself pleaded so long and so often."

As General Alexeïev is about to return to his post as Chief of the General Staff, Pokrovski has promised to put before him, in my name, the political and humanitarian arguments in favour of an offensive north of the Dobrudja.

*Friday, March 2, 1917.*

The effects of the stimulant which the Allied Conference provided to the Russian Government departments, or at any rate the departmental offices in Petrograd, has already worn off.

The artillery, war-factory and supply and transport departments have fallen back into their old casual and leisurely ways. Our officers and engineers are up against the same dilatory replies, the same dead weight of inactivity and indifference, as before. It is enough to make one despair of everything. How I can sympathize with the spur of Ivan the Terrible and the cane of Peter the Great!

\* \* \*

*Saturday, March 3, 1917.*

I have just been told of a long conversation which took place recently between the Empress and Monsignor Theophanes, the Bishop of Viatka. This prelate is a creature of Rasputin, but the way he spoke to his sovereign shows that he has a sensible and independent mind.

The Tsarina first asked him about the attitude of his flock towards the war. Monsignor Theophanes replied that the spirit of patriotism had not waned in his diocese which lies west of the Urals: of course the public was suffering from so long a trial; there was grumbling and criticism, but men were willing to put up with many more losses and much more privation in the cause of victory. He could reassure the Empress on that point. But in other respects he had much to worry and grieve him; he had observed that the demoralization of the people was making alarming progress every day. The men who returned from the army, sick, wounded, or on leave, were giving utterance to scandalous opinions; they openly professed unbelief and atheism and did not even shrink from blasphemy and sacrilege. Anyone could see at once that they had been in touch with intellectuals and Jews. The cinemas, which had now spread to every little provincial town, were now another cause of degeneration. Melodramatic adventures and scenes of robbery and



murder were too heady for simple souls such as *moujiks* : they fired their imaginations and turned their heads. It was thus that the bishop accounted for the unwonted number of sensational crimes of violence which have been recorded in recent months not only in the diocese of Viatka but the neighbouring dioceses of Ekaterinburg, Tobolsk, Perm and Samara. In support of his statements, he showed the Empress photographs of looted shops, sacked houses and mutilated corpses, all of them obviously showing the handiwork of audacious criminality. He then castigated a wholly modern vice—morphia-taking—of which the masses in Russia had not even heard until quite recently. The evil had come from all the military hospitals with which the country is dotted. Many doctors and chemists had got into the habit of taking morphia ; through them the use of the drug had spread among officers, officials, engineers and students. Before long the hospital attendants had followed their examples, and their case was far more pernicious because they had made men of the people their companions in debauchery. When they did not take morphia themselves they sold it to others; everyone in Viatka knew the cabarets where this trade was carried on. The police had good reasons for shutting their eyes to it . . .

Monsignor Theophanes ended thus :

“The remedy for all these evils should be sought, I think, in strong action by the clergy. But I confess with grief to Your Majesty that the general demoralization has not spared our priests, particularly in the country districts. A few are real saints but the majority are abandoned and degraded. They have no influence with their parishioners. The religious education of the people must begin all over again, and to that end the moral ascendancy of the clergy must be restored to them. The first step is to suppress the sale of the sacraments. The State must pay the priest a stipend sufficient to live upon and then he must be forbidden to accept any money save that given voluntarily for his church or the poor. The wretched condition to which the *sviat chenik* is reduced, as things are now, compels him to resort to a scandalous sort of trading which deprives

him of all prestige and dignity. I anticipate great disasters to our holy church unless its supreme guardian, our revered and pious Tsar, reforms it as soon as possible . . .”

In the mouth of one of Rasputin's bishops, these words are an edifying prediction.

I have heard from another source that Monsignor Vladimir, Archbishop of Penza, and Monsignor Andrew, Bishop of Ufa, two prelates who would not consent to throw in their lot with Rasputin and are among the most distinguished members of the Russian clergy, have expressed exactly the same opinions as Monsignor Theophanes.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, March 6, 1917.*

Petrograd is short of bread and wood, and the public is suffering want.

At a bakery on the Liteiny this morning I was struck by the sinister expression on the faces of the poor folk who were lined up in a queue, most of whom had spent the whole night there.

Pokrovski, to whom I mentioned the matter, did not conceal his anxiety. But what can be done! The transport crisis is certainly worse. The extreme cold (43°) which has all Russia in its grip has put more than twelve hundred engines out of action, owing to boiler tubes bursting, and there is a shortage of spare tubes as a result of strikes. Moreover, the snowfall of the last few weeks has been exceptionally heavy and there is also a shortage of labour in the villages to clear the permanent way. The result is that at the present moment fifty-seven thousand railway wagons cannot be moved.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, March 8, 1917.*

There has been great agitation in Petrograd all day. Processions have been parading the main streets. At several points the mob shouted for “Bread and peace!”

At others it sang the Working Man's *Marseillaise*. In the Nevsky Prospekt there have been slight disorders.

I had Trepov, Count Tolstoi, Director of the Hermitage, my Spanish colleague, Villasinda, and a score of my regular guests to dinner this evening.

The occurrences in the streets were responsible for a shade of anxiety which marked our faces and our conversation. I asked Trepov what steps the Government was taking to bring food supplies to Petrograd, as unless they are taken the situation will probably soon get worse. His replies were anything but reassuring.

When I returned to my other guests, I found all traces of anxiety had vanished from their features and their talk. The main object of conversation was an evening party which Princess Leon Radziwill is giving on Sunday : it will be a large and brilliant party, and everyone was hoping that there will be music and dancing.

Trepov and I stared at each other. The same words came to our lips :

“What a curious time to arrange a party !”

In one group, various opinions were being passed on the dancers of the Marie Theatre and whether the palm for excellence should be awarded to Pavlova, Kchechinskaïa or Karsavina, etc.

In spite of the fact that revolution is in the air in his capital, the Emperor, who has spent the last two months at Tsarskoïe-Selo, left for General Headquarters this evening.

\* \* \*

*Friday, March 9, 1917.*

This morning the excitement in industrial circles took a violent form. Many bakeries were looted, especially in the Viborg Quarter and Vassili-Ostrov. At several points the Cossacks charged the crowd and killed a number of workmen.

Pokrovski has been confiding his anxieties to me :

“I should regard these disorders as of minor importance

if my dear colleague at the Interior still retained a shred of common sense. But what can you do with a man who has lost all idea of reality for weeks, and confers with the shade of Rasputin every night? This very evening he's been spending hours in conjuring up the ghost of the *staretz*!"

\* \* \*

*Saturday, March 10, 1917.*

The hair-raising problem of food supplies has been investigated to-night by an "Extraordinary Council," which was attended by all the ministers (except the Minister of the Interior), the President of the Council of Empire, the President of the Duma and the Mayor of Petrograd. Protopopov did not condescend to take part in the conference; he was no doubt communing with the ghost of Rasputin.

Gendarmes, Cossacks and troops have been much in evidence all over the city. Until four o'clock in the afternoon the demonstrations gave rise to no untoward event. But the public soon began to get excited. The *Marseillaise* was sung, and red flags were paraded on which was written: *Down with the Government! . . . Down with Protopopov! . . . Down with the war! . . . Down with Germany!* . . . Shortly after five disorders began in the Nevsky Prospekt. Three demonstrators and three police officers were killed and about a hundred persons wounded.

Order was restored by the evening. I took advantage of the situation to take the Vicomtesse du Halgouët, my secretary's wife, to hear a little music at the Liloty concert. We passed Cossack patrols the whole way there.

The hall of the Marie Theatre was almost empty; not more than fifty persons were present and there were many gaps even in the orchestra itself. We heard, or rather sat through, the first symphony of the young composer Saminsky, an unequal work which is quite powerful in places though its effects are wasted in a certain straining after startling dissonances and complicated harmonic formulæ. At any other time these subtleties of technique

would have interested me: to-night they simply exasperated me. Very fortunately, the violinist Enesco came next. After glancing round the deserted hall with eyes that were almost in tears, he came close up to our seats at the corner of the orchestra, as if he meant to play for us alone. This splendid virtuoso, worthy rival to Ysaye and Kreisler, never moved me so deeply before with his broad and unaffected playing which is capable of the most delicate modulations and the most impassioned transports. A Fantasia of Saint-Saëns with which he ended was a miracle of fervid romanticism. When this was over, we came away.

The square of the Marie Theatre, usually so gay, looked utterly desolate; my car was the only vehicle there. The Moïka bridge was guarded by a picket of gendarmes and troops were massed in front of the Lithuania Prison.

Madame du Halgouët shared my astonishment at the sight and remarked:

“Are we witnessing the last night of the *régime*?”

\* \* \*

*Sunday, March 11, 1917.*

The ministers sat in council until five o'clock this morning. Protopopov condescended to join his colleagues and reported to them the strong measures he had prescribed to preserve order “at any cost.” The result is that General Khabalov, Military Governor of Petrograd, has had the city placarded with the following warning this morning:

*All meetings or gatherings are forbidden. I notify the civil population that I have given the troops fresh authority to use their arms and stop at nothing to maintain order.*

As I was returning from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs this morning, I met one of the leaders of the Cadet Party, Basil Maklakov.

“We’re in the presence of a great political movement now,” he said. “Everyone has finished with the present system. If the Emperor does not grant the country prompt

and far-reaching reforms, the agitation will develop into riots. And there is only a step between riot and revolution."

"I entirely agree with you, but I'm very much afraid that the Romanovs have found their Polignac in Protopopov. But if a crisis is precipitated you will certainly be called upon to play a part. In that case, let me beg of you not to forget the fundamental obligations the war has laid on Russia."

"You can count on me."

In spite of the warning of the Military Governor, the mob is becoming increasingly disorderly and aggressive; in the Nevsky Prospekt it is getting larger every hour. Four or five times the troops have been compelled to fire to escape being brushed aside. There are scores of dead.

Towards the end of the day, two of my secret informers whom I had sent into the industrial quarters returned with the report that the ruthless measures of repression adopted have taken the heart out of the workmen, who were saying that they had "had enough of going to the Nevsky Prospekt to be killed!"

But another informer tells me that the Volhynian Regiment of the Guard refused to fire. This is a fresh factor in the situation and reminds me of the sinister warning of October 31.

As I needed a rest after all the work and worry of to-day (I have been literally besieged by anxious members of the French colony) I turned out after dinner for an evening call on Countess P—— who lives in Glinka Street. When I left her about eleven o'clock I heard that demonstrations were continuing in the neighbourhood of Our Lady of Kazan and the Gostiny-Dvor. I thought it as well to return to the embassy by the roundabout way along the Fontarska. My car had just reached the quay when I noticed a house which was a blaze of lights; opposite it was a long line of cars and carriages. Princess Leon Radziwill's party was in full swing; I caught a glimpse of the car of the Grand Duke Boris as we passed.

Sénac de Meilhan tells us that there was plenty of gaiety in Paris on the night of the 5th October, 1789!



## CHAPTER IX

MARCH 12—22, 1917





## CHAPTER IX

MARCH 12—22, 1917

From riot to revolution.—Barricades, looting and fires ; street fighting.—The army fraternizes with the insurgents.—The Government thrown into confusion.—The ministers appeal to the Emperor.—The Winter Palace and the Fortress are occupied.—The Duma organizes an executive committee.—Further fighting in the streets. General Ivanov's mission. The last chance of saving tsarism. Rapid progress of the revolution.—The socialists form a "Council of Working-Men and Soldier Deputies," the *Soviet*, in opposition to the Duma. The vital part of the army in the revolutionary drama. Shameful behaviour of the Grand Duke Cyril and the Imperial Guard.—The Emperor, after a futile attempt to return to Petrograd, stops at Pskov where two envoys from the Duma beg him to abdicate in favour of his son. A provisional government formed.—Nicholas II will not consent to be separated from his son and abdicates in favour of his brother, Michael-Alexandrovitch. Rage of the *Soviet*, which demands and secures the renunciation of the throne by the Grand Duke Michael.—News from Tsarskoïe-Selo ; the Grand Duke Paul informs the Empress of the Emperor's abdication.—The Provisional Government's weakness in dealing with the *Soviet* : the Petrograd garrison extorts a promise not to be sent to the front.—Miliukov is appointed Foreign Minister ; our first talk : I demand that Russia's new rulers shall proclaim their determination to continue the war to the bitter end.—A general summary of recent happenings. Inaction of the clergy in the revolution. Supplementary details of the abdication of the Emperor.—Manifesto issued by the Provisional Government ; it contains only a vague allusion to the prosecution of the war : I protest to Miliukov.—The *Soviet* compels the Provisional Government to arrest the fallen monarchs. Miliukov asks the British Government to give them a place of refuge in England. Eloquent farewell of the Emperor to the army.

*Monday, March 12, 1917.*

At half-past eight this morning, just as I finished dressing, I heard a strange and prolonged din which seemed to come from the Alexander Bridge. I looked out : there was no one on the bridge, which usually presents such a busy scene. But, almost immediately, a disorderly mob carrying red flags appeared at the end which is on the right bank of the Neva, and a regiment came towards it from the opposite side. It looked as if there would be a violent collision, but on the contrary the two bodies coalesced. The army was fraternizing with revolt.

Shortly afterwards, someone came to tell me that the Volhynian regiment of the Guard had mutinied during the night, killed its officers and was parading the city, calling on the people to take part in the revolution and trying to win over the troops who still remain loyal.

At ten o'clock there was a sharp burst of firing and flames could be seen rising somewhere on the Liteiny Prospekt which is quite close to the embassy. Then silence.

Accompanied by my military attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Lavergne, I went out to see what was happening. Frightened inhabitants were scattering through the streets. There was indescribable confusion at the corner of the Liteiny. Soldiers were helping civilians to erect a barricade. Flames mounted from the Law Courts. The gates of the arsenal burst open with a crash. Suddenly the crack of machine-gun fire split the air: it was the regulars who had just taken up position near the Nevsky Prospekt. The revolutionaries replied. I had seen enough to have no doubt as to what was coming. Under a hail of bullets I returned to the embassy with Lavergne who had walked calmly and slowly to the hottest corner out of sheer bravado.

About half-past eleven I went to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, picking up Buchanan on the way.

I told Pokrovski everything I had just witnessed.

"So it's even more serious than I thought," he said.

But he preserved unruffled composure, flavoured with a touch of scepticism, when he told me of the steps on which the ministers had decided during the night:

"The sitting of the Duma has been prorogued to April and we have sent a telegram to the Emperor, begging him to return at once. With the exception of M. Protopopov, my colleagues and I all thought that a dictatorship should be established without delay; it would be conferred upon some general whose prestige with the army is pretty high, General Russky for example."

I argued that, judging by what I saw this morning, the loyalty of the army was already too heavily shaken for our hopes of salvation to be based on the use of the

"strong hand," and that the immediate appointment of a ministry inspiring confidence in the Duma seemed to me more essential than ever, as there is not a moment to lose. I reminded Pokrovski that in 1789, 1830 and 1848, three French dynasties were overthrown because they were *too late* in realizing the significance and strength of the movement against them. I added that in such a grave crisis the representative of *allied* France had a right to give the Imperial Government advice on a matter of internal politics.

Buchanan endorsed my opinion.

Pokrovski replied that he personally shared our views, but that the presence of Protopopov in the Council of Ministers paralyzed action of any kind.

I asked him :

"Is there no one who can open the Emperor's eyes to the real situation ?"

He heaved a despairing sigh.

"The Emperor is blind !"

Deep grief was writ large on the face of the honest man and good citizen whose uprightness, patriotism and disinterestedness I can never sufficiently extol.

He asked us to call in again at the end of the day.

When I returned to the embassy the situation had become much worse.

One piece of bad news followed another. The Law Courts had become nothing but an enormous furnace ; the Arsenal on the Liteiny, the Ministry of the Interior, the Military Government building, the Minister of the Courts' offices, the headquarters of the Detective Force, the too, too famous *Okbrana*, and a score of police-stations were in flames ; the prisons were open and all the prisoners had been liberated ; the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul was undergoing a siege and the Winter Palace was occupied. Fighting was in progress in every part of the city.

At half-past six I returned with Buchanan to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Pokrovski told us that in view of the gravity of the situation the Council of Ministers had decided to remove Pokrovski from the Ministry of the Interior and appoint

General Makarenko "provisional director." The Council at once reported accordingly to the Emperor and also begged him to confer extraordinary powers immediately on some general, authorizing him to take all the exceptional measures the situation requires, and particularly to appoint other ministers.

He also informed us that in spite of the *ukase* of prorogation, the Duma met at the Tauris Palace this afternoon. It has set up a permanent committee with the object of serving as intermediary between the Government and the mutinous troops. Rodzianko, who is president of this committee, has telegraphed to the Emperor that the dynasty is in the greatest danger and the slightest hesitation will be fatal to it.

It was pitch dark when Buchanan and I left the Ministry for Foreign Affairs ; not a lamp was lit. Just as my car was emerging from the Millionaia, opposite the Marble Palace, we were stopped by a military mob. Something was happening in the barracks of the Pavlovski Regiment. Infuriated soldiers were shouting, yelling and fighting on the square. My car was surrounded. There was a violent demonstration against us. It was in vain that my chasseur and chauffeur tried to explain that we were the ambassadors of France and England. The doors were opened and our position was on the point of becoming dangerous when a non-commissioned officer, perched on a horse, recognized us and in a voice of thunder proposed a "cheer for France and England!" We came out of this unpleasant predicament to the accompaniment of a storm of chéering.

I spent the evening trying to obtain information as to what the Duma was doing. It was a very difficult matter as shooting and burning were in progress in all quarters.

At length certain reports came in which substantially agreed.

The Duma, I was told, was doing everything in its power to organize a Provisional Government, restore order to some extent and secure the food supplies of the capital.

The swift and complete defection of the army has been a great surprise to the leaders of the liberal parties and

even the working-class party. As a matter of fact, it faces the moderate deputies, who are trying to direct and control the popular movement (Rodzianko, Miliukov, Shingarev, Maklakov, etc.) with the question whether it is not too late to save the dynastic *régime*. It is a formidable problem, as the republican idea, which is favoured in labour circles in Petrograd and Moscow, is foreign to the spirit of the country and it is impossible to foretell how the armies at the front will receive the occurrences in the capital.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, March 13, 1917.*

The firing, which had died down by this morning, began again about ten o'clock ; it seemed to be pretty vigorous in the region of the Admiralty. Armoured cars, with machine-guns and displaying red flags, were continually passing the embassy at top speed. More fires were blazing at several points in the capital.

With a view to avoiding another incident such as yesterday's, I preferred not to use my car in going to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs ; I walked there, accompanied by my chasseur, the faithful Léonide, who was wearing civilian clothes.

Close to the Summer Garden I met one of the Ethiopians who used to mount guard at the Emperor's door and had often ushered me into the imperial study. The honest negro was also wearing civilian clothes and looked very dejected. We walked together for a short distance—there were tears in his eyes. I tried to comfort him a little and shook his hand. While he was walking away I watched him with amused eyes. In this collapse of a whole political and social system he stands for the monarchical splendours of other days, the picturesque and sumptuous ceremonial introduced by Elizabeth and Catherine the Great (long ago) and all that magic atmosphere which was conjured up by the words which will henceforth mean nothing : "The Court of Russia."

I met Buchanan in the vestibule of the Ministry. Pokrovski said to us :

"The Council of Ministers has been sitting continuously all night in the Marie Palace. The Emperor has no illusions about the gravity of the situation, as he has given General Ivanov extraordinary powers to restore order; he also seems determined to reconquer his capital by force and will not hear of making terms with troops who have killed their officers and raised the red flag. But I doubt whether General Ivanov, who was at Mohilev yesterday, will ever reach Petrograd: the insurgents are in control of all the railways. And even if he succeeded in getting here, what could he do? All the regiments have gone over to the revolution. Only certain isolated detachments and a few bodies of police are still offering resistance. Of my colleagues in the ministry the majority are in flight and several have been arrested. I personally had the greatest difficulty in getting away from the Marie Palace to-night. Why, I'm awaiting my fate at this moment."

He spoke very calmly, in a simple, dignified, courageous and firm tone which gave a look of nobility to his pleasant face. To realize how meritorious his serenity is, it must be remembered that, though he was Comptroller-General of the finances of the Empire for a long time, he has no capital at all and is blessed with a large family.

"As you've just crossed the city," he said, "tell me if you think the Emperor can still save his crown?"

"He has a chance, because there is appalling confusion in all quarters. But the Emperor must at once accept what has happened by appointing the provisional committee of the Duma as ministers and pardoning the rebels. I also think that if he appeared in person to his army and people, and solemnly announced on the steps of Our Lady of Kazan that a new era is beginning for Russia, he would have a splendid reception. But if he waits a day it will be too late. There is a fine remark of Lucan's which can be applied to the opening stages of all revolutions: *Ruit irrevocabile vulgus*. I have been saying it over to myself to-night. In the stormy circumstances through which we are passing, the irrevocable soon becomes a fact!"

"We don't even know where the Emperor is. He must have left Mohilev yesterday evening or at dawn this morning. I have no news whatever of the Empress. It's impossible to communicate with Tsarskoïe-Selo."

As we came out of the ministry, Sir George Buchanan said to me :

"Let's go by the Court Quay instead of going through the Millionaïa. We shall avoid the Guard's barracks that way."

But as we entered the quay we were recognized by a body of students who cheered us and provided an escort. Opposite the Marble Palace the crowd got much larger and noisily enthusiastic. Cries of "Long live the Internationale ! Long live peace !" blended unpleasantly with shouts of "Long live France ! Long live England !"

At the corner of Suvorov Square, Buchanan left me after advising me to take shelter in his embassy from the mob, which was getting somewhat too excited. But as it was late and I wanted to wire to Paris before lunch, I went on my way.

Opposite the Summer Garden I was entirely surrounded by the crowd which stopped a passing motor machine-gun and insisted on my getting in and being conveyed to the Tauride Palace. A huge and boisterous student, waving a red flag, bawled in my face in excellent French :

"Pay your respects to the Russian Revolution ! The red flag is Russia's flag now ; do homage to it in the name of France !"

He translated his words into Russian and they were greeted with frantic cheers. I replied :

"I cannot pay a finer tribute to Russian liberty than to invite you to join me in saying : 'Long live the war !'"

He was very careful not to translate my reply. At length we reached the embassy. Not without considerable trouble and the strenuous efforts of my *chasseur* did I succeed in getting clear of the crowd and within my own doors.

During the whole of this afternoon the revolution has been pursuing its logical and inevitable course. *Ruit irrevocabile vulgus.*



I have successively learned that Prince Golitzin, (President of the Council) the Metropolitan Pitirim, Sturmer, Dobrovolsky, Protopopov, etc., have been arrested. The livid glow of fresh fires can be seen at various points. The Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul has become the headquarters of the revolt. Fierce fighting is taking place around the Admiralty, where the War Minister, the Naval Minister and several high officials have taken refuge. In all other parts of the city the insurgents are ruthlessly tracking down "traitors," police officials and gendarmes. The shooting has sometimes been so brisk in the streets round the embassy that my *dvorniks* have refused to take my telegrams to the General Post Office, the only one which is still working; I have had to rely on a petty officer of the French Navy who is on leave in Petrograd and is not afraid of bullets.

About five o'clock, a high official, K—, came to tell me that the executive committee of the Duma is trying to form a "provisional government," but that President Rodzianko, Gutchkov, Shulgin and Maklakov are utterly taken aback by the anarchical behaviour of the army.

"They never imagined a revolution like this," my informer added; "they hoped to direct it and keep it within bounds through the army. The troops recognize no leader now and are spreading terror throughout the city."

He then told me abruptly that he had been asked to see me by President Rodzianko, and asked me if I had no advice, no suggestion to send him.

"As French Ambassador," I said, "the war is my main concern of course, so I want the effects of the revolution to be kept down as much as possible and order to be restored at the earliest moment. Don't forget that the French army is making preparations for a great offensive and that the Russian army is bound in honour to do its share."

"So you think it necessary to retain the imperial system?"

"Yes, but in a constitutional as opposed to an autocratic form."

"Nicholas II cannot be allowed to reign any more; no one has any confidence left in him and he has lost all

authority. In any case, he would never consent to sacrifice the Empress."

"You may change the Tsar, but you should stick to tsarism."

And I endeavoured to explain to him how tsarism is the very framework of Russia, the essential and irreplaceable buttress of Russian society and the sole link which unites all the heterogeneous nations of the Empire:

"If tsarism collapsed, you may be certain that it would bring down the whole edifice of Russia with it."

He assured me that Rodzianko, Gutckov and Miliukov thought exactly the same and were hard at work on that footing, but that the socialist and anarchist elements were gaining ground every hour.

"That's another reason for losing no time," I said.

At nightfall, I ventured out with my secretary Chambrun to cheer up some women friends who lived near and whom I knew to be extremely anxious. After a call on Princess Stanislas Radziwill and the Countess de Robien, we decided to return, as in spite of the darkness there was constant firing and, as we crossed the Serguievskaja, we heard the bullets whistling past.

During a day which has been prolific in grave events and may perhaps have determined the future of Russia for a century to come, I have made a note of one episode which seems trivial at first sight, but in reality is highly significant. The town house of Kchechinskaia, at the end of the Kammenny-Ostrov Prospekt and opposite Alexander Park, was occupied by the insurgents to-day and sacked from top to bottom. I remember a detail which makes it easy to see why the residence of the famous dancer has been singled out by mob fury. It was last winter; the cold was intense and the thermometer had fallen to—35°. Sir George Buchanan, whose embassy is centrally heated, had been unable to procure coal, which is the essential fuel for that system. He had appealed to the Russian Admiralty, but in vain. That very morning Sazonov had definitely told him it was impossible to find coal in any public depot. In the afternoon we went for a walk together on the Islands,

as the sky was clear and there was no wind. Just as we were entering Kammenny-Ostrov Prospekt, Buchanan burst out: "Well, if that isn't a bit too thick!" He pointed to four military lorries opposite the dancer's house; they were laden with sacks of coal which a squad of soldiers was engaged in removing. "Don't worry, Sir George," I said. "You haven't the same claim as Madame Kchechinskaïa to the attentions of the imperial authorities."

It is probable that for years past many thousands of Russians have made similar remarks about the favours heaped upon Kchechinskaïa. The *ballerina*, once the beloved of the Tsarevitch and subsequently courted by two Grand Dukes at once, has become as it were a symbol of the imperial order. It is that symbol which has been attacked by the plebs to-day. A revolution is always more or less a summary and a sanction.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, March 14, 1917.*

There has been much fighting and burning again in Petrograd this morning. The soldiers are hunting down officers and gendarmes—a ruthless and savage chase which betrays all the barbarous instincts still latent in the *moujik* nature.

In the general anarchy which is raging in Petrograd, three directing bodies are in process of formation:

(1) The "Executive Committee of the Duma," with Rodzianko as its president and comprising twelve members, including Miliukov, Shulgin, Kononov, Kerensky and Chaidze. It is thus representative of all parties of the progressive group and the Extreme Left. It is trying to secure the necessary reforms immediately in order to maintain the existing political system, at the cost of proclaiming another emperor, if need be. But the Tauris Palace is occupied by the insurgents so that the committee has to confer amidst general uproar, and is exposed to the bullying of the mob; (2) The "Council

of Working-Men and Soldier Deputies," the *Soviet*. It holds its sittings at the Finland station. Its password and battlecry is "Proclaim the social Republic and put an end to the war." Its leaders are already denouncing the members of the Duma as traitors to the revolution, and openly adopting the same attitude towards the legal representative body as the Commune of Paris adopted towards the Legislative Assembly in 1792; (3) The "Headquarters of the Troops." This body sits in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. It is composed of a few junior officers who have gone over to the revolution and several N.C.O.'s or soldiers who have been promoted to officer rank. It is endeavouring to introduce a little system into the business of supplying the combatants and is sending them food and ammunition. In particular it is keeping the Duma in a state of subjection. Through it the soldiery is all-powerful at the present moment. A few battalions, quartered in and around the Fortress, are the only organized force in Petrograd; they are the prætorians of the revolution and as determined, ignorant and fanatical as the famous battalions of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Faubourg Saint-Marcel in that same year 1792.

Since the Russian revolution, memories of the French revolution have often passed through my mind. But the spirit of the two movements is quite dissimilar. By its origins, principles and social, rather than political character, the present upheaval has a much stronger resemblance to the Revolution of 1848.

The Emperor left Mohilev this morning. His train proceeded towards Bologoïe, which is half-way between Moscow and Petrograd. It is presumed that the Emperor intends to return to Tsarskoïe-Selo but some people are wondering whether he is not thinking of going to Moscow to organize resistance to the revolution.

The fact that the army has monopolized the lead in the revolutionary drama has just been confirmed before my own eyes by the spectacle of three regiments marching

past the embassy on their way to the Tauride Palace. They marched in perfect order, with their band at the head. A few officers came first, wearing a large red cockade in their caps, a knot of red ribbon on their shoulders and red stripes on their sleeves. The old regimental standard, covered with ikons, was surrounded by red flags.

The Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovitch has come out openly in favour of the revolution.

He has gone even further. Forgetting the oath of fealty, and the office of aide-de-camp which bind him to the Emperor, he went off about one o'clock this afternoon to make obeisance to popular rule. In his naval captain's uniform he was seen leading the marines of the Guard, whose commander he is, and placing their services at the disposal of the rebels!

Shortly afterwards the Potemkin Palace was the scene of another and equally melancholy spectacle. A body of officers and men, who had been sent by the garrison of Tsarskoïe-Selo, signified its adherence to the revolution.

At the head were the Cossacks of the Escort, those magnificent horsemen who are the flower of the *Kasatchesvo*, the proud and privileged *élite* of the Imperial Guard. Then came the Regiment of His Majesty, the *légion sacrée* which is recruited by selection from all the units of the Guard and whose special function it is to secure the personal safety of their sovereigns. Next came His Majesty's Railway Regiment which has the duty of conducting the imperial trains and watching over the safety of Their Majesties when travelling. At the end of the procession marched the Police of the Imperial Palaces, chosen satellites who have to guard the imperial residences from within and thus participate daily in the intimate, private life of their masters. All of these men, officers and privates alike, have vowed their devotion to the new authority—whose very name they do not know—as if they could not embrace the chains of a new servitude too soon.

While this shameful piece of news was being told him,

my mind went back to the brave Swiss who let themselves be cut to pieces on the steps of the Tuileries on August 10, 1792, though Louis XVI was not their sovereign and when they greeted him they did not call him : *Tsary batiushka*, "Our Little Father the Tsar !"

In the course of the evening Count S—— called on me to ask for information about the situation. I told him incidentally of the humiliating submission of the Tsarskoïe-Selo garrison at the Tauride Palace. At first he would not believe me. After long and mournful reflection he continued :

"What a horrible, horrible thing. The Guard troops who took part in that demonstration have disgraced themselves for ever. But perhaps the fault is not entirely theirs. In their continual attendance on Their Majesties they've seen too many things they ought not to have seen ; they know too much about Rasputin . . ."

As I wrote yesterday when on the subject of Kchechinskaiâ, a revolution is always more or less a summary and a sanction.

Just before midnight I was told that the leaders of the liberal parties held a secret conference this evening—in the absence of the socialists and without their knowledge—with a view to arriving at an agreement about the future form of government.

They were of one accord that the monarchy must be retained, but Nicholas II, who is responsible for the present disasters, must be sacrificed to the salvation of Russia. The former president of the Duma, Alexander Ivanov Gutchkov, who is now sitting in the Council of Empire, then expressed the following opinion : "It is of vital importance that Nicholas II should not be overthrown by violence. The only thing which can secure the permanent establishment of a new order, without too great a shock, is his voluntary abdication. The spontaneous renunciation of Nicholas II is the only means of saving the imperial system and the dynasty of the Romanovs." This view, which seems to me very sound, was unanimously adopted.

The liberal leaders closed their conference by deciding that Gutchkov and Shulgin, the deputy from the Nationalist Right, shall go straight to the Emperor and beg him to abdicate in favour of his son.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, March 15, 1917.*

Gutchkov and Shulgin left Petrograd at nine o'clock this morning. Thanks to the aid of an engineer attached to the railway service, they were able to get a special train without arousing the suspicions of the socialist committees.

Discipline is gradually being re-established among the troops. Order has been restored in the city and the shops are cautiously opening their doors again.

The Executive Committee of the Duma and the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies have come to an agreement on the following points :

(1) Abdication of the Emperor ; (2) Accession of the Tsarevitch ; (3) The Grand Duke Michael (the Emperor's brother) to be regent ; (4) Formation of a responsible ministry ; (5) Election of a constituent assembly by universal suffrage ; (6) All races to be proclaimed equal before the law.

The young deputy Kerensky, who has gained a reputation as an advocate in political trials, is coming out as one of the most active and strong-minded organizers of the new order. His influence with the *Soviet* is great. He is a man we must try to win over to our cause. He alone is capable of making the *Soviet* realize the necessity of continuing the war and maintaining the alliance. I have therefore telegraphed to Paris, suggesting to Briand that an appeal from the French socialists to the patriotism of the Russian socialists should be sent through Kerensky.

But the whole of the interest of the day has been concentrated on the little town of Pskov, half-way between Petrograd and Dvinsk. It was there that the imperial train, which failed to reach Tsarskoïe-Selo, stopped at eight o'clock yesterday evening.

The Emperor, who left Mohilev on March 13 at 4-30 a.m., decided to go to Tsarskoïe-Selo, the Empress having begged him to return there at once. The news he had received from Moscow did not alarm him unduly. Of course it may be that General Voyeïkov kept part of the truth from him. About three o'clock in the morning of March 14, as the engine of the imperial train was taking in water at the station of Malaïa-Vichera, General Zabel, commander of His Majesty's Railway Regiment, took it upon himself to awaken the Emperor to tell him that the line to Petrograd had been closed and that Tsarskoïe-Selo was in the hands of the revolutionary forces. After giving vent to his surprise and irritation at not having been better informed, the Emperor is said to have replied :

"Moscow will remain faithful to me. We will go to Moscow !"

Then he is reported to have added, with his usual apathy :

"If the revolution succeeds, I shall abdicate voluntarily. I'll go and live at Livadia ; I love flowers."

But at the station of Dno it was learned that the whole populace of Moscow had adhered to the revolution. Then the Emperor decided to seek a haven of refuge among his troops and selected the headquarters of the armies of the North, commanded by General Russky, at Pskov.

The imperial train arrived at Pskov at eight o'clock yesterday evening.

General Russky came to confer with the Emperor at once and had no difficulty in demonstrating that his duty was to abdicate. He also invoked the unanimous opinion of General Alexeïev and the army commanders, whom he had consulted by telegraph.

The Emperor instructed General Russky to report to Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, his intention to renounce the throne.

This morning Pokrovski resigned his office as Foreign Minister ; he did so with that calm and unaffected dignity which makes him so lovable.

"My work is over," he said to me. "The President of the Council and all my colleagues have been arrested or are in flight. It is three days since the Emperor showed any



sign of life and, to crown everything, General Ivanov, who was to bring us His Majesty's orders, has not arrived. In the circumstances it is impossible for me to carry out my duties ; I am leaving my post and handing over its duties to my administrative deputy. In this way I avoid breaking my oath to the Emperor, as I have not entered into any sort of communication with the revolutionaries."

During the evening, the leaders of the Duma have at last succeeded in forming a Provisional Government with Prince Lvov as president ; he is taking the Ministry of the Interior. The other ministers are Gutchkov (War), Miliukov (Foreign Affairs), Terestchenko (Finance), Kerensky (Justice), etc.

The first cabinet of the new *régime* was only formed after interminable wrangling and haggling with the *Soviet*. The socialists have certainly realized that the Russian proletariat is still too inorganic and ignorant to shoulder the practical responsibilities of power ; but they are anxious to be the power behind the scenes, so they have insisted on the appointment of Kerensky as Minister for Justice in order to keep an eye on the Provisional Government.

\* \* \*

*Friday, March 16, 1917.*

Nicholas II abdicated yesterday, shortly before midnight.

When the emissaries of the Duma, Gutchkov and Shulgin, arrived at Pskov about nine o'clock in the evening, the Emperor gave them his usual simple and kindly reception.

In very dignified language and a voice which trembled somewhat, Gutchkov told the Emperor the object of his mission and ended with these words :

"Nothing but the abdication of Your Majesty in favour of your son can still save the Russian Fatherland and preserve the dynasty."

The Emperor replied very quickly, as if referring to some perfectly commonplace matter :

"I decided to abdicate yesterday. But I cannot be

separated from my son ; that is more than I could bear ; his health is too delicate ; you *must* realize what I feel . . . I shall therefore abdicate in favour of my brother, Michael Alexandrovitch."

Gutchkov at once bowed to the argument of fatherly affection to which the Tsar appealed and Shulgin also acquiesced.

The Emperor then went into his study with the Minister of the Court ; he came out ten minutes later with the act of abdication signed. Count Fredericks handed it to Gutchkov.

This memorable document is worded as follows :

*By the grace of God, we, Nicholas II, Emperor of all the Russias, Tsar of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland, etc., etc., to all our faithful subjects make known :*

*In these days of terrible struggle against the foreign enemy who has been trying for three years to impose his will upon Our Fatherland, God has willed that Russia should be faced with a new and formidable trial. Troubles at home threaten to have a fatal effect on the ultimate course of this hard-fought war. The destinies of Russia, the honour of Our heroic army, the welfare of the nation and the whole future of our dear country require that the war shall be continued, cost what it may, to a victorious end.*

*Our cruel enemy is making his final effort and the day is at hand when our brave army, with the help of our glorious allies, will overthrow him once and for all.*

*At this moment, a moment so decisive for the existence of Russia, Our conscience bids Us to facilitate the closest union of Our subjects and the organization of all their forces for the speedy attainment of victory.*

*For that reason We think it right—and the Imperial Duma shares Our view—to abdicate the crown of the Russian State and resign the supreme power.*

*As We do not desire to be separated from Our beloved son, We bequeath Our inheritance to Our brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, and give him Our blessing on his accession to the throne. We ask him to govern in the closest concert with the representatives of the nation who sit in the*

*legislative assemblies and to pledge them his inviolable oath in the name of the beloved country.*

*We appeal to all the loyal sons of Russia and ask them to do their patriotic and sacred duty by obeying their Tsar at this moment of painful national crisis and to help him and the representatives of the nation to guide the Russian State into the path of prosperity and glory.*

*May God help Russia!*

NICHOLAS.

On reading this declaration, which was typed on an ordinary sheet of paper, the emissaries of the Duma were deeply stirred and could hardly speak as they took their leave of Nicholas II who was as unmoved as ever as he gave them a kindly handshake.

As soon as they left the carriage the imperial train started off for Dvinsk with a view to returning to Mohilev.

History can show few events so momentous, or so pregnant with possibilities and far-reaching in their effects. Yet of all those of which it has left any record, is there a single one which has taken place in such casual, commonplace and prosaic fashion, and above all with such indifference and self-effacement on the part of the principal hero?

Is it simply lack of interest in the Emperor's case? I think not. His abdication decree, over which he has pondered long if he did not actually word it himself, is inspired by the loftiest sentiments, and its general tone is nobility itself. But his moral attitude at this supreme crisis appears perfectly logical if it is admitted as I have often remarked, that for many months past the unhappy sovereign has felt himself lost and that he long ago made his sacrifice and accepted his fate.

The accession of the Grand Duke Michael to the throne has aroused the fury of the *Soviet*: "No more Romanovs!" is the cry in all quarters: "We want a republic!"

For one moment the harmony was shattered which was established with such difficulty between the Executive

Committee of the Duma and the *Soviet* yesterday evening. But fear of the gaol-birds who are in command at the Finland Station and the Fortress has compelled the representatives of the Duma to give way. A delegation from the Executive Committee went to see the Grand Duke Michael who made no sort of objection and consented to accept the crown only if it should be offered to him by the constituent assembly. Perhaps he would have submitted less tamely if his wife, the clever and ambitious Countess Brassov, had been at his side and not at Gatchina.

The *Soviet* is now master.

Disturbances in the city are also beginning again. In the course of the afternoon I have been told of many demonstrations against the war. Certain regiments have suggested making a protest outside the French and English Embassies. At seven o'clock this evening the Executive Committee decided it was better to post soldiers in the two embassies. Thirty-two cadets of the Corps of Pages have just taken up their station in my house.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, March 17, 1917.*

The weather is very dismal this morning. From dark and heavy clouds the snow is falling in dense flakes, and so slowly that I cannot even make out the granite wall which lines the icy bed of the Neva twenty paces from my windows. We might be in the very depths of winter. The gloom of the landscape and the enmity of nature harmonize only too well with the sinister course events are taking.

One of those who were present gives me the following detailed account of the meeting at the conclusion of which the Grand Duke Michael signed his provisional abdication yesterday.

It took place at ten o'clock in the morning at Prince Paul Putiatin's house, No. 12, Millionaia.

In addition to the Grand Duke and his secretary, Matveïev, there were present Prince Lvov, Rodzianko,

Miliukov, Nekrassov, Kerensky, Nabokov, Shingarev and Baron Nolde; about half-past ten they were joined by Gutchkov and Shulgin, who had come straight from Pskov.

As soon as the discussion began, Gutchkov and Miliukov boldly asserted that Michael Alexandrovitch had no right to evade the responsibility of supreme power. Rodzianko, Nekrassov and Kerensky argued *contra* that the accession of a new Tsar would release a torrent of revolutionary passion and bring Russia face to face with a frightful crisis; their conclusion was that the monarchical question should be reserved until the meeting of the constituent assembly which would make its sovereign will known. The argument was pressed with such force and stubbornness, particularly by Kerensky, that all those present came round to it with the exception of Gutchkov and Miliukov. With complete disinterestedness the Grand Duke himself agreed.

Gutchkov then made a final effort. Addressing the Grand Duke in person and appealing to his patriotism and courage he pointed out how necessary it was that the Russian people should be presented at once with the living embodiment of a national leader :

“ If you are afraid to take up the burden of the imperial crown *now*, Monseigneur, you should at least agree to exercise supreme authority as ‘ Regent of the Empire during the vacancy of the throne,’ or, to take a much finer title, ‘ Protector of the Nation,’ as Cromwell styled himself. At the same time you would give a solemn undertaking to the nation to surrender your power to a constituent assembly as soon as the war ends.”

This ingenious idea, which might have saved the whole situation, made Kerensky almost beside himself with passion and provoked him to a torrent of invective and threats which terrified everyone there.

In the general confusion the Grand Duke rose with the remark that he would like to think things over by himself for a minute or two. He was making for the next room when Kerensky leaped in front of him as if to keep him back :

" Promise us not to consult your wife, Monseigneur ! "

His thoughts had at once gone to the ambitious Countess Brassov whose empire over her husband's mind was complete. With a smile the Grand Duke replied :

" Don't worry, Alexander Feodorovitch, my wife isn't here at the moment ; she stayed behind at Gatchina ! "

Five minutes later the Grand Duke returned. In very calm tones he declared :

" I have decided to abdicate. "

The triumphant Kerensky called out :

" Monseigneur, you are the noblest of men ! "

The rest of the company, however, were wrapped in a gloomy silence ; even those who had been the strongest advocates of abdication—Prince Lvov and Rodzianko, for instance—seemed overwhelmed by the irreparable occurrence that had just taken place. Gutchkov relieved his conscience by a final protest :

" Gentlemen, you are leading Russia to her ruin ; I am not going to follow you in that baneful path. "

A provisional and conditional abdication was then drawn up by Nekrassov, Nabokov and Baron Nolde. Michael Alexandrovitch interrupted them several times in their task to make it quite clear that his refusal of the imperial crown remained subject to the ultimate decision of the Russian nation as represented by a constituent assembly.

At the conclusion he took the pen and signed.

Throughout this long and painful discussion the Grand Duke's composure and dignity never once deserted him. Hitherto his compatriots have had but a poor opinion of him ; he was considered to be of weak character and lacking in brains. But on this historic occasion his patriotism, nobility and self-sacrifice were very touching. When the final formalities had been concluded, the delegates of the Executive Committee could not help showing him that the impression he made upon them won their sympathy and respect. Kerensky tried to interpret the emotion they all felt in a lapidary phrase which fell from his lips in a theatrical outburst.

" Monseigneur ! You have generously entrusted to us the sacred cup of your power. I promise you we will hand

it on to the constituent assembly without spilling a single drop."

General Efimovitch, who called on me this morning, has brought me some news of Tsarskoïe-Selo.

It was through the Grand Duke Paul that the Empress learned yesterday evening of the Emperor's abdication; she had heard nothing of him for two days. She burst out:

"It's quite impossible! It isn't true! It's another newspaper lie! I believe in God and trust the army. Neither could have deserted us at so critical a moment!"

The Grand Duke read her the abdication which had just been published. Then everything came home to her and she burst into tears.

The Provisional Government has not been long in capitulating to the demands of the socialists. At the *Soviet's* command it has actually come to the following humiliating decision:

The troops which have taken part in the revolutionary movement will not be disarmed but will remain in Petrograd.

Thus the first act of the revolutionary army is to extract a promise that it shall not be sent to the front but shall fight no more! What a badge of shame for the Russian Revolution! How can one help thinking of the contrast afforded by the Volunteers of 1792! Besides, the soldiers in the streets seem lost to all decency and are giving a disgusting exhibition of effrontery and licence. By its infamous insistence the *Soviet* has created for itself a formidable militia, for the garrisons of Petrograd and the suburbs (Tsarskoïe-Selo, Peterhof, Krasnoïe-Selo and Gatchina) comprise no less than 170,000 men.

This afternoon Miliukov took over the portfolio of foreign affairs. He made a point of seeing me at once, as well as my English and Italian colleagues.

We answered his summons at once.

I found him very much changed, extremely weary and looking ten years older. The days and nights of fierce

controversy through which he has just passed have worn him out.

I asked him :

"Before you take to official phraseology tell me frankly and honestly what you think of the situation ?"

In an outburst of sincerity he replied :

"Within the last twenty-four hours I have passed from utter despair to all but perfect confidence."

Then we talked officially :

"I'm not yet in a position," I said, "to tell you that the Government of the Republic recognizes the government you have set up ; but I'm certain I'm only anticipating my instructions in promising you active and sympathetic assistance on my part."

He thanked me warmly, and continued : "We didn't want this revolution to come during hostilities ; I didn't even anticipate it ; but it has taken place, as the result of other agencies, and through the mistakes and crimes of the imperial *régime*. Our business now is to save Russia by ruthlessly prosecuting the war to victory. But the passions of the people have been so exasperated and the difficulties of the situation are so frightful that we must at once make great concessions to the national conscience."

Among these immediate concessions he mentioned the arrest of several ministers, generals, officials, and so on, the proclamation of a general amnesty—from which the servants of the old government will of course be excluded !—the destruction of all the imperial emblems, the convocation of a constituent assembly in the near future ; in a word every measure calculated to rob the Russian nation of all fear of a counter-revolution.

"So the Romanov dynasty has fallen ?" I said.

"Yes, in fact ; no, in law. The constituent assembly alone will be qualified to change the political status of Russia."

"But how will you secure the election of this constituent assembly ? Will the men at the front be content to forego their votes ?"

With considerable confusion he admitted : "We shall be obliged to grant the men at the front the right to vote."



“What, you’re going to give the men at the front a vote! Most of them are fighting thousands of versts from their villages and can’t read or write!”

Miliukov as good as told me that in his heart of hearts he shared my views and confided that he is doing his utmost to give no definite promise as to the date of the general election.

“But the socialists are insisting on an election at once,” he added. “They are extremely strong, and the situation is very, very critical!”

As I pressed him to explain these words, he told me that though order has been restored to some extent in Petrograd, the Baltic Fleet and Kronstadt garrison are in open revolt.

I asked Miliukov about the official nomenclature of the new government.

“The title hasn’t been decided upon yet,” he said. “At the moment we are calling ourselves the *Provisional Government*. But in that name we are getting all executive authority, including the imperial prerogative, into our hands; so we are not responsible to the Duma.”

“In a word, you derive all your power from the revolution?”

“No, we have received it, by inheritance, from the Grand Duke Michael, who transferred it to us by his abdication decree.”

This legal sensitiveness showed me that the “moderates” of the new order, Rodzianko, Prince Lvov, Guchkov and Miliukov himself, are extremely worried and uneasy in their conscience at the idea of violating monarchical rights. At bottom—and it is only the normal course of revolutions—they feel that they are already being thrust aside, and are fearfully wondering where they will be to-morrow.

Miliukov looked so exhausted, and the loss of voice he has suffered in the last few days made talking so painful for him, that I had to cut short our interview. But before leaving him I urged very strongly that the Provisional Government should delay no longer in solemnly proclaiming its fidelity to the alliances and its determination to continue the war at any cost.

"You must realize that what is wanted is a plain and unambiguous proclamation. Of course I haven't a doubt about your own feelings. But the direction of Russian affairs is now at the mercy of new forces; they must be given a lead at once. I have another reason for insisting that the ruthless prosecution of the war and the maintenance of the alliances shall be proclaimed openly. I must tell you that in the old days I more than once caught germanophile circles at Court—the Sturmer and Protopopov gang—dropping a hint which worried me very much; it was admitted the Emperor Nicholas would not be able to make peace with Germany so long as Russian soil had not been entirely cleared of the enemy, for he had taken an oath on the Gospel and the ikon of Our Lady of Kazan; but it was whispered that if the Emperor could be induced to abdicate in favour of the Tsarevitch under the regency of the Empress, his disastrous oath would not be binding on his heir. You can see that I should like to be sure that the new Russia considers herself bound by the oath of her former Tsar."

"You'll receive every guarantee on that head."

The food problem is still so difficult in Petrograd that my supplies and the skill of my chef are very valuable to my friends. I had seven or eight of them to dinner to-night, the party including the Gortchakovs and Benckendorffs. Everyone was very depressed; they could see extremist proletarian doctrines already sweeping over Russia, disintegrating the national unity, spreading anarchy, famine and ruin everywhere.

My forebodings are equally gloomy, alas! None of the men in power at this moment possesses the political vision, faculty of swift decision, courage and boldness which so formidable a situation calls for. They are "Octobrists," "Cadets," advocates of constitutional monarchy, level-headed, honest, moderate and disinterested. They remind me of Molé, Odilon, Barrot, etc., in July, 1830. Yet the least that is required now is a Danton! I am told, however, that they have one man of action among them, the young Minister of Justice, Kerensky,

who represents the "Labour" group in the Duma and has been forced on the Provisional Government by the *Soviet*.

There is no question that the men of initiative, energy and courage, must be sought for in the *Soviet*. The multifarious sections of the Social-Revolutionary and Social-Democratic parties, "People's Party," "Labour Men," "Terrorists," "Maximalists," "Minimalists," "Defeatists," etc., are not lacking in men who have given proof of resolution and audacity in plots, penal servitude and exile; I need only mention Tcheidze, Tseretelli, Zinoviev and Axelrod. These are the true protagonists of the drama on which the curtain is now rising!

\* \* \*

*Sunday, March 18, 1917.*

As yet I know nothing of the effect the Russian revolution has had in France; but I am afraid of the illusions it may create there and it is only too easy for me to guess all the examples with which it is likely to present the socialist jargon-mongers. I have therefore thought it advisable to give my government a word of warning and I am cabling as follows to Briand:

*When I said good-bye to M. Doumergue and General de Castelnau last month, I asked them to advise the President of the Republic and yourself of my increasing concern at the internal situation of the Empire; I added that it would be a serious mistake to think that time is working for us, at any rate in Russia; I came to the conclusion that we should expedite our military operations as much as possible.*

*I am more convinced of that than ever. A few days before the Revolution I advised you that the decisions of the recent conference were already a dead letter, that the confusion in the munitions production establishments and transport services was beginning again on an even more formidable scale, and so forth. The question is whether the new Government is capable of promptly carrying out the necessary reforms. It says, and quite sincerely, that it can; but I don't believe a*

word of it. For it is not merely confusion, but wholesale disorganization and anarchy from which the military and civil departments are suffering.

*Taking the most hopeful view I can, what can we expect? A terrible load would be off my mind if I could be certain that the fighting armies will not be contaminated by demagogic agitation and discipline soon restored among the garrisons behind the front. I have not yet abandoned that hope. I can still bring myself to think that the social-democrats will not translate their desire to end the war into irreparable acts. I can also admit the possibility of a revival of patriotic fervour in some parts of the country. But for all that there must be a weakening of the national effort which was only too anæmic and spasmodic already. And the process of recovery is likely to be a long one with a race whose ideas of method and forethought are so rudimentary.*

After sending this cable, I went out to see some of the churches: I was curious to know how the faithful would behave at the Sunday mass now that the name of the Emperor has been deleted from public prayers. In the orthodox liturgy divine protection was continually being invoked for the Emperor, Empress, Tsarevitch, and all the imperial family, it was a kind of recurring chorus. By order of the Holy Synod, the prayer for the Sovereigns has been abolished and nothing has taken its place. The churches I visited were the Preobrajensky Cathedral, Saint Simeon and Saint Panteleimon. The same scene met me everywhere; a grave and silent congregation exchanging amazed and melancholy glances. Some of the *moujiks* looked bewildered and horrified and several had tears in their eyes. Yet even among those who seemed the most moved I could not find one who did not sport a red cockade or armband. They had all been working for the Revolution; all of them were with it, body and soul. But that did not prevent them from shedding tears for their little Father, the Tsar, *Tsary batinsbka!*

Then I called at the Foreign Office.

Miliukov told me that yesterday evening he discussed with his colleagues the formula to be inserted in the coming manifesto of the Provisional Government on the subject

of the prosecution of the war and the maintenance of the alliance ; he added in a tone of embarrassment :

" I hope to secure the adoption of a form of words which will satisfy you."

" You mean to say you only *hope* ? A hope's no good to me : I want a certainty."

" You may be certain I shall do everything in my power . . . . But you've no idea how difficult our socialists are to handle ! And we've got to avoid a rupture with them at any cost. Otherwise, it means civil war ! "

" Whatever reasons you may have for going slowly with the hotheads of the *Soviet*, you *must* realize that I cannot tolerate any doubt about your determination to continue the alliance and carry on the war."

" Please trust me ! "

Miliukov struck me as less optimistic than he was yesterday. The news from Kronstadt, the Baltic Fleet and Sebastopol is bad. To crown all, disorder is spreading at the front ; officers have been massacred.

This afternoon I went for a walk on the Islands, which are more deserted than ever and still snow-bound.

Thinking of my visit to the churches this morning, I mused on the strange inaction of the clergy during the revolution ; it has taken no part ; is never seen anywhere and has given absolutely no sign of life. This abstention and self-effacement are all the more surprising because there was not one celebration, ceremony or public occasion in which the Church did not occupy the foreground with the splendours of its rites, apparel and singing.

The matter is self-explanatory, and to put that explanation into words I have only to search the pages of this Diary. In the first place the Russian people are not as religious as they appear to be : they are primarily mystics. Their habit of continually crossing themselves, their genuflections, their taste for ritual and processions and craze for ikons and relics are simply an outlet for the demands of their lively imagination. Pierce but a little way into their minds and all one finds is a faith which is vague and hazy, sentimental and dreamy, almost destitute

of intellectual and theological elements and always on the verge of sinking into sectarian anarchy. One must also bear in mind the confined and humiliating servitude tsarism has always imposed on the Church, a servitude which made the clergy a kind of spiritual police, to reinforce the military police. Often enough, during the sumptuous services in the cathedrals of St. Alexander Nevsky or Kazan, I have called to mind Napoleon's remark that "an archbishop is simply a second Prefect of Police!" Nor must one forget the opprobrium brought on the Holy Synod and the episcopal hierarchy in the last few years by Rasputin. The Hermogenes, Varnava, Basily and Pitirim scandals, and many others, had greatly shocked all true believers. When the nation rose in revolt the clergy could do nothing but keep silence. But when the time for reaction arrives, perhaps the country priests, who have remained in touch with the rural masses, will make their voice heard again.

I was told yesterday that the form of the Emperor's abdication decree was settled by Nicholas Alexandrovitch Basily, formerly Deputy-Director of Sazonov's department and now in charge of the diplomatic section of General Headquarters; the decree is said to have been communicated by telegraph from Pskov to Mohilev on March 15, even before the delegates of the Duma, Gutchkov and Shulgin, had seen the Emperor. It is a point which would be interesting to clear up.

Curiously enough, late this afternoon I had a visit from Basily whom General Alexeïev has sent to the Provisional Government on some mission.

"Hallo!" I said: "I understand it's you who drafted the Emperor's abdication decree?"

He started, and protested vigorously: "I absolutely deny the paternity of the document the Emperor signed. The draft I prepared on General Alexeïev's orders was very different."

What he told me was this:

"In the morning of the 14th March General Alexeïev received from President Rodzianko a telegram informing

him that the machinery of government had ceased to function in Petrograd and the only means of averting anarchy was to secure the Emperor's abdication in favour of his son. The Chief of Staff of the Imperial Armies was thus faced with a dreadful problem. Would not the Tsar's abdication threaten the army with divisions, if not disruption? The only thing to do was to get all the military heads to agree at once on one course. General Russky, commanding the northern armies, had already pronounced strongly in favour of immediate abdication. General Alexeïev personally inclined to that view; but the matter was so serious that he thought it his duty to consult all the other Army Group commanders by telegraph, Generals Evert, Brussilov, and Sakharov and the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaïevitch. They all replied that the Emperor should abdicate at the earliest possible moment."

"On which day did all these replies come into General Alexeïev?"

"During the morning of March 15th. It was then that General Alexeïev instructed me to report to him on the circumstances in which the fundamental status of the Empire authorized the Tsar to lay down his sceptre. I was not long in furnishing him with a memorandum explaining and proving that if the Emperor abdicated he was obliged to hand over his powers to his legitimate heir, the Tsarevitch Alexis. 'That's exactly what I thought,' the General said to me. 'Will you draft me a proclamation on those lines at once?' I soon produced a draft in which I expounded the theory of my memorandum to the best of my ability while endeavouring to keep the necessity of prosecuting the war to victory persistently in the foreground. The Chief of Staff had with him his principal colleague and loyal Quartermaster, General Lukomsky. I handed him my document. He read it aloud and agreed with every word. Lukomsky also approved of it. The document was immediately telegraphed to Pskov to be laid before the Emperor. A little before midnight on the same day, General Danilov, Quartermaster-General of the northern armies called his colleague at G.H.Q. to the tape-machine to tell him of His Majesty's decision. I happened

at that moment to be in Lukomsky's room, with the Grand Duke Sergei Michailovitch. We all rushed to the telegraph office and the machine began to work before our eyes. I immediately recognized my draft on the tape as it came out.

. . . *To all Our faithful subjects We make known . . . In these days of fierce conflict with the foreign foe, etc.* But you can just imagine the amazement of all three of us when we observed that the name of the Grand Duke Michael had been substituted for that of the Tsarevitch Alexis ! We looked at each other in blank consternation for the same idea entered all our heads. The immediate accession of the Tsarevitch was the only means of stopping the revolution in its career, or at any rate keeping it within the limits of a great constitutional reform. In the first place, the young Alexis Nicholaïevitch would have had the law on his side. He would also have benefited by the sympathetic feeling of the nation and army towards him. Lastly—and this was the vital point—the imperial office would not have been vacant even for a moment. If the Tsarevitch had been proclaimed, no one would have had the authority to make him abdicate. What has happened to the Grand Duke Michael would not have been possible in the case of this boy. There might have been some wrangling over the appointment of the regent, but that's all. Russia would have a national head . . . But where are we *now* ? ”

“ I'm sorry to say that I fear events will prove you right before very long . . . When the Emperor deleted his son's name from the proclamation you drafted for him he launched Russia on a terrible adventure.”

After discussing this topic for some considerable time, I asked Basily :

“ Have you seen the Emperor since his abdication ? ”

“ Yes. On the 16th March, when the Emperor was returning from Pskov to Mohilev, General Alexeïev sent me to tell him how the situation was developing. I met his train at Orcha and went straight to his coach. He was absolutely calm, but it shocked me to see him with a haggard look and hollow eyes. After telling him of the latest happenings in Petrograd, I took the liberty of saying



that we at the *Stavka* were greatly distressed because he had not transferred his crown to the Tsarevitch. He answered quietly: 'I cannot be separated from my son.' I learned afterwards from his escort that before the Emperor came to his decision he had consulted his physician Professor Feodorov: 'I order you to give me a frank answer,' he had said. 'Do you think it possible that Alexis can ever get better?' 'No, Your Majesty, his disease is incurable.' 'That's what the Empress thought long ago, though I myself still had hopes. As God has willed it thus I shall not separate myself from my poor boy!' A few minutes later dinner was served. It was a melancholy meal. All of us felt our hearts bursting; we couldn't eat or drink. Yet the Emperor retained wonderful self-control and asked me several questions about the men who form the Provisional Government; but as he was wearing a rather low collar I could see that he was continually choking down his emotion. I left him yesterday morning at Mohilev."

This evening I dined quietly with Madame P——, the other guests being Count Nicholas Muraviev, a former Governor of Moscow, and Count Kutusov.

Madame P—— said:

"As long as Russia is governed from Petrograd things will go from bad to worse . . . Petrograd can only destroy; Moscow alone is capable of reconstruction."

Muraviev replied:

"Don't build on Moscow too much! The civil population is almost as rotten as that of Petrograd."

Kutusov interrupted:

"We have very much further to fall yet; in fact we shall touch the bottom of the abyss . . . But within three months the Empire will be restored. Never forget that Russia has 178,000,000 inhabitants, of which 160,000,000 are peasants, 12,000,000 Cossacks, 3,000,000 commercial folk and civil servants, 1,800,000 aristocrats and 1,200,000—at most—working-men. Those 1,200,000 *rabotchiks* will not be our masters for ever!"

"So you think that Dubrovin and Purishkevitch's

famous 'Black Bands' have still their part to play?" I said.

"Certainly . . . and before very long!"

\* \* \*

*Monday, March 19, 1917.*

Nicholas Romanov, as the Emperor is now styled in official documents and the papers, has asked the Provisional Government for—

(1) A free pass from Mohilev to Tsarskoïe-Selo; (2) Permission to reside at the Alexander Palace until his children have recovered from the measles; (3) a free pass from Tsarskoïe-Selo to Port Romanov on the Murman coast.

The government has granted his requests.

Miliukov, who is my authority for this information, presumes that the Emperor intends to ask the King of England for a place of refuge.

"He should lose no time in getting away," I said. "Otherwise, the *Soviet* extremists might quote some awkward precedents against him."

Miliukov, who is rather of the Rousseau school and, being the soul of kindness himself only too prone to believe in the innate goodness of the human race, does not think that the lives of the sovereigns are in danger. If he wants to see them go it is mainly in order to spare them the sorrows of imprisonment and trial, which would greatly increase the difficulties of the Government. He lays great emphasis on the extraordinary restraint and forbearance displayed by the people during this revolution, the small number of victims, the way in which violence has been quickly followed by moderation, and so forth.

"That's all right," I said; "the mob has soon returned to its natural kindness of heart, because it is not in any great distress and is overwhelmed with the pleasant sensation of freedom. But if there is a famine violence will rage at once."

I quoted Roederer's highly expressive remark in 1792: "Orators have only to appeal to hunger to conjure up cruelty."

*Tuesday, March 20, 1917.*

The Provisional Government's manifesto was published this morning. It is a long, verbose and strongly-worded document which fiercely castigates the *ancien régime* and promises the nation all the benefits of equality and liberty. The war is barely mentioned : *The Provisional Government will loyally maintain all its alliances and do everything in its power to provide the army with all its needs with a view to carrying on the war to a victorious conclusion.* Nothing more !

I went straight to Miliukov ; this is exactly what I said : "After my recent talks with you I was not surprised at the language adopted by the manifesto published this morning on the subject of the war ; but it doesn't make me any less angry. A determination to prosecute the war at any cost and until full and final victory isn't even mentioned ! The name of Germany does not occur ! There isn't the slightest allusion to Prussian militarism : No reference whatever to our war aims ! France too has had her revolutions with the enemy at the gates ; but Danton in 1792 and Gambetta in 1870 used very different language . . . And yet in those days France had no ally who was in deadly peril on her behalf."

Miliukov looked very pale and abashed as he heard me out. Choosing his words carefully, he argued that the manifesto was intended specifically for the Russian nation and, anyhow, political eloquence to-day employs a more temperate vocabulary than in 1792 and 1870.

I then read him the appeal which our socialists, Guesde, Sembat and Albert Thomas, have just made—at my suggestion—to the socialists of Russia, and I had no difficulty in bringing home to him the warmth of tone, fierce resolution and determination to conquer which inspires every line of this appeal.\*

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\* Text of the telegram from Mm. Jules Guesde, Scrubat and Thomas to M. Kerensky, Minister of Justice in the Provisional Government.

*Paris,*

*March 18, 1917.*

*We send the Socialist Minister of a Russia reborn our congratulations and fraternal greetings.*

Miliukov, who seemed painfully moved to the very depths, did his best in urging extenuating circumstances, the difficulties of the internal situation, and so forth. He wound up with :

“ Give me time ! ”

“ Time has never been more precious ! Swift action has never been so necessary ! Please don't think it isn't very painful for me to talk to you like this. But the moment is far too serious for us to treat each other to diplomatic euphemisms. The question with which we are faced—or perhaps I should say the question that forces itself upon us is this : yes or no, will Russia go on fighting at the side of her Allies until full and final victory, without faltering and without ulterior motives ? Your ability and your patriotic and honourable past are my guarantee that you will soon give me the answer I expect.”

Miliukov promised to take an early opportunity to set our minds entirely at rest.

This afternoon I went for a walk round the centre of the city and Vassili-Ostrov. Order has been almost restored. There are fewer drunken soldiers, yelling mobs and armoured cars laden with evil-looking maniacs. But I found “ meetings ” in progress everywhere, held in the open air, or perhaps I should say open gale. The groups were small : twenty or thirty people at the outside, and comprising soldiers, peasants, working-men and students. One of the company mounts a stone, or a bench, or a heap of snow and talks his head off, gesticulating wildly. The audience gazes fixedly at the orator and listens in a kind of

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*We hail the acquisition of a free Government for their country by the working classes and Russian socialism with the deepest emotion.*

*Once again, like our ancestors of the great Revolution, you have to put forth the same effort to secure the independence of the nation and the defence of the country.*

*By a war waged to the last extremity, and by the heroic discipline of citizen-soldiers who would lay down their lives for liberty, we must work together in destroying the last and most formidable citadel of absolutism, Prussian militarism.*

*Everyone here looks with serene confidence for a fresh effort on the part of a Russian nation all of whose energies shall be bent upon the war. It is the victory we are about to win by our fervour which, by bringing the world peace, will secure its welfare and liberty for ever.*

JULES GUESDE, MARCEL SEMBAT, ALBERT THOMAS.

rapt absorption. As soon as he stops another takes his place and immediately gets the same fervent, silent and concentrated attention.

What an artless and affecting sight it is when one remembers that the Russian nation has been waiting centuries for the right of speech !

On my way home I dropped in on Princess R—— on the Serguievskaja for tea.

The beautiful Madame D——, the "Houdon Diana" or "Tauride Diana," was there in a tailor-made and skunk toque, smoking cigarettes with the lady of the house. Prince B——, General S—— and a number of familiars came in one after the other. The stories told and impressions exchanged revealed the darkest pessimism.

But there was one anxiety greater than all the others, a haunting fear in every mind—the partition of the land.

"We shall not get out of it *this* time ! What will become of us without our rent-rolls ? "

To the Russian nobility, the rent-roll is of course the main, and often the only, source of income.

The company's forebodings comprised not only legal partition of the land, *i.e.* formal expropriation, but confiscation by the high hand, wholesale looting and *jacquerie*. I am certain that the same sort of conversation can be heard in every corner of Russia at the present time.

A fresh caller, a lieutenant in the *Chevaliers-Gardes*, entered the room, wearing the red favour on his tunic. He soothed the company's anxieties a little by telling them (supporting his argument with figures) that the agrarian question is not as terrifying as it seems at first sight.

"There's no need to have immediate recourse to our estates to take the edge off the peasants' hunger," he said. "With the crown lands, perhaps ninety-four million *desiatins*,\* the church and monastic lands, let's say three million *desiatins*, there's enough to keep the *moujiks* from gnawing-pains for quite a long time to come."

His entire audience agreed with this argument ; everyone consoled himself or herself with the thought that obviously

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\* A *desiatin* is approximately one hectare.

the Russian nobility will not suffer too severely if the Emperor, Empress, Grand Dukes, Grand Duchesses, the Church and the monasteries are ruthlessly robbed and plundered. As Rochefoucauld said, "We can always find strength to bear the misfortunes of others."

I may remark in passing that one person present possesses an estate of 300,000 hectares in Volhynia!

When I returned to the embassy, I heard that there had been a ministerial crisis in France and Briand's place is being taken by Ribot.

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*Wednesday, March 21, 1917.*

During the last few days a rumour has spread among the mob that "Citizen Romanov" and his wife, "Alexandra the German," are working secretly for a restoration of autocracy, with the connivance of the "moderate" ministers, Lvov, Miliukov, Gutchkov, etc. The *Soviet* accordingly demanded the immediate arrest of the sovereigns yesterday evening. The Provisional Government yielded to its desires. The same evening four deputies of the Duma, Bublikov, Gribunin, Kalinin and Vershinin, left for G.H.Q. at Mohilev, with instructions to bring the Emperor back with them.

As regards the Empress, General Kornilov went to Tsarskoïe-Selo this morning with an escort. On his arrival at the Alexander Palace he was immediately received by the Tsarina who heard the decision of the Provisional Government without remark; all she asked was that she should be left all the servants who are looking after her invalid children—a request which has been granted. The Alexander Palace is now cut off from all communication with outside.

Miliukov is very much upset over the arrest of the Emperor and Empress; he wants the King of England to offer them the hospitality of British territory and even to guarantee their safety; he has therefore begged Buchanan to wire to London at once and insist on having an answer *without a moment's delay*.

“ It’s the last chance of securing these poor unfortunates freedom, and perhaps of saving their lives ! ” he told us .

Buchanan returned at once to the Embassy to convey Miliukov’s suggestion to his Government.

As I was walking along the Millionaia this afternoon, I saw the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch. In civilian dress—the get-up of an old *tchiboonik*—he was prowling round his palace. He has openly sided with the revolution and is full of optimistic talk. I know him well enough to have no doubt that he is sincere when he says that the collapse of autocracy will now mean the salvation and greatness of Russia ; but I do not know whether he will keep his illusions for long and hope he will not lose them as Philippe-Egalité lost his. In any case he has honestly done his best to open the Emperor’s eyes to the approaching catastrophe, he actually had the courage some time back to send him the following letter, which was shown to me this morning :

*You have often mentioned your determination to continue the war to victory ! But do you really think victory is possible in the present state of affairs ?*

*Do you know the situation within the Empire ? Are you told the truth ? Has anyone pointed out where the root of the evil lies ?*

*You have frequently told me that men were always deceiving you and that the only thing you believed in was the views of your wife. I tell you that the words she utters are the result of clever intrigues and not in accordance with the truth. If you are impotent to rid her of those influences, the least you can do is to be always on your guard against the schemers who use her as their tool. Clear these dark forces out, and you will immediately recover the confidence of your people which you have already half lost.*

*I have hesitated long before telling you the truth, but I have made up my mind to do so, with encouragement from your mother and two sisters. You are about to witness fresh disturbances, nay, an attempt on your life.*

*I speak as I do in the interests of your own safety and that of your throne and country.*

*Thursday, March 22, 1917*

The Emperor reached Tsarskoïe-Selo this morning.

His arrest at Mohilev produced no incident ; his farewell to the officers about him (many of whom shed tears) was disconcertingly banal in its simplicity. But the Order of the Day in which he takes leave of the army has a certain ring of nobility about it :

*I address you for the last time, you soldiers who are so dear to my heart. Since I renounced the throne of Russia for myself and my son, power has been transferred to the Provisional Government which has been set up on the initiative of the Imperial Duma.*

*May God help that Government to lead Russia to glory and prosperity ! And may God also help you, my brave soldiers, to defend your country against a cruel foe ! For more than two years and a half you have continuously borne the hardships of an arduous service ; much blood has been spilt, enormous efforts have been made and already the hour is at hand in which Russia and her glorious allies will break down the enemy's last desperate resistance in one mighty common effort.*

*This unprecedented war must be carried through to final victory. He who thinks of peace at the present moment is a traitor to Russia.*

*I am firmly convinced that the boundless love you bear our beautiful Fatherland is not dead in your hearts. May God bless you and Saint George, the great martyr, lead you to victory !*

*NICHOLAS.*

Returning from a visit to the Admiralty Canal I came through Glinka Street where the Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovitch lives. I saw something waving over his palace—a red flag !





CHAPTER X  
MARCH 23—APRIL 6, 1917.



## CHAPTER X

MARCH 23—APRIL 6, 1917.

The British Government offers the Tsar and Tsarina an asylum on British soil.—A forecast of the development of the revolution.—Rasputin's body is exhumed by night and burned in the forest of Pargolovo: a scene from Dante.—The *Soviet* opposes the departure of the sovereign.—Official recognition of the Provisional Government; Kerensky, Minister of Justice, comes to the front.—A reflection of the opinions prevailing in *informed* circles: "We cannot continue the war."—Indiscipline spreading in the fighting armies: *Prikaz* No. 1.—Agitation among the subject nationalities: symptoms of national disintegration.—The new Military Governor of Petrograd tries to regain control of the garrison.—French opinion goes astray on the subject of the Russian revolution. Vital differences between the psychology of the Latin and Slav revolutionary.—The Government of the Republic sends Albert Thomas on a mission to Petrograd.—The sovereigns in captivity at Tsarskoie Selo.—Funeral service for the victims of the fighting; the interment on the Champ de Mars; the clergy absent. The moral of this day.—On the frontiers of Kurdistan; a last exploit of the Russian army.

*Friday, March 23, 1917.*

This morning Buchanan has announced that King George, with the advice and approval of his ministers, offers the Emperor and Empress the hospitality of British territory; but he refuses to guarantee their safety and confines himself to a hope that they will remain in England until the end of the war.

Milikov is obviously greatly touched by this announcement, but he added sadly:

"But I fear it comes too late!"

It is certainly true that from day to day—I could almost say from hour to hour—the tyranny of the *Soviet*, the despotism of the extreme parties and the domination of Utopians and anarchists are becoming increasingly evident.

And so, as the latest press telegrams show me that people in Paris are cherishing curious illusions about the Russian revolution, I have telegraphed to Ribot in the following terms:

Notwithstanding the importance of all that has happened in the last twelve days, it is my opinion that the events we are witnessing are only a prelude. The forces which are destined to be the determining factor in the final result of the revolution (I mean the rural masses, the priests, the Jews, the subject nationalities, the bankruptcy of the State, the economic *débâcle*, etc.), have not even entered the field. So at the moment it is impossible to give any logical and practical forecast of the future of Russia. The best proof of this lies in the hopelessly contradictory prophecies offered me by people in whose judgment and open-mindedness I have the greatest confidence. Some regard the proclamation of a republic as a certainty. Others think the restoration of the Empire, under constitutional forms, is inevitable.

But if your Excellency will be good enough to rest content for the time being with my impressions, which are wholly dominated by the thought of the war, I see the course of events in the following light :

1. When will the forces to which I have just referred begin to make themselves felt ?—Hitherto, the Russian nation has attacked the dynasty and the administrative caste, nothing else. We shall now be faced with economic, social, religious and ethnical problems. These problems are very formidable, from the point of view of the war ; for the Slav imagination, far from being *constructive like that of the Latin or Anglo-Saxon, is essentially anarchical and dispersive. Until these problems are solved the public mind will be wholly taken up with them. Yet we cannot want the solution to be precipitate, for it cannot be realized without severe upheavals. We must therefore expect that for a considerable time to come Russia's effort will be weakened and uncertain.*

2. *Is the Russian nation determined to continue the war to final victory ? Russia implies so many different races, and ethnical antagonisms are so acute in certain regions, that the national idea is far from being universal. The conflict of social classes has a similar effect on patriotism. The working masses, the Jews and the inhabitants of the Baltic provinces, for instance, merely regard the war as senseless*

butchery. On the other hand, the fighting armies and the genuinely Russian populations have in no way abandoned their hope of victory and their determination to achieve it. If I wanted to express my idea somewhat extravagantly to make it more intelligible, I should be tempted to say that "In the present phase of the revolution Russia cannot make peace or war."

In yesterday's *Petrograd Gazette* the Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovitch has had a long interview published in which he attacks the fallen sovereigns :

*I have often wondered, he says, whether the ex-Empress were not in league with William II ; but each time I have forced myself to dismiss so horrible a suspicion.*

Who can tell whether this treacherous insinuation will not before long provide the foundation for a terrible charge against the unfortunate Tsarina ? The Grand Duke Cyril should know or be reminded that the most infamous calumnies which Marie Antoinette had to meet when she faced the Revolutionary Tribunal first took wing at the elegant suppers of the Comte d'Artois.

About five o'clock I went to call on Sazonov at the Hôtel de l'Europe where he has been suffering from a stubborn attack of bronchitis for the last three weeks. I found him in a very melancholy frame of mind, though not despairing. As I expected, he sees the hand of Providence in the present misfortunes of Russia :

"We deserved chastisement. I did not think it would be so severe. . . . But God cannot mean Russia to perish. . . . A purified Russia will emerge from this trial."

Then he spoke in strong terms of the conduct of the Emperor :

"I needn't tell you of my love for the Emperor, and with what devotion I have served him. But as long as I live I shall never forgive him for abdicating for his son. He had no shadow of right to do so ! . . . Is there a

body of law in the world which allows the rights of a minor to be abandoned? And what's to be said when those rights are the most sacred and august on earth? Fancy destroying a three-hundred-year-old dynasty and the stupendous work of Peter the Great, Catherine II and Alexander I! What a tragedy! What a disaster!"

His eyes were full of tears.

I asked him if his health would allow him to leave for London in the near future as I had no doubt that he would consider it his duty to take up his ambassadorial post.

"I'm horribly perplexed," he said. "What line of policy can I follow in London? I shall certainly not refuse my help to honest men like Lvov and Miliukov. But will they stay in power? . . . In any case, my doctor doesn't think I shall be fit to travel for at least three weeks."

I was certainly struck by his deathly pallor, his haggard features and all the signs of physical and mental suffering he betrayed.

Last night Rasputin's coffin was secretly exhumed from its resting-place in the chapel at Tsarskoïe-Selo and taken away to the Forest of Pargolovo, fifteen versts north of Petrograd.

In the midst of a clearing there, a number of soldiers, commanded by an engineer officer, had piled up a large quantity of pine logs. After forcing off the coffin lid they drew the corpse out with sticks; they dare not touch it with their hands, owing to its putrefying condition, and they hoisted it, not without difficulty, on to the heap of logs. Then they drenched it in petrol and set it on fire. The process of cremation lasted until dawn, more than six hours.

In spite of the icy wind, the appalling length of the operation and the clouds of pungent and fetid smoke which rose from the pyre, several hundred *moujiks* crowded round the fire all night; silent and motionless, they gazed in horror-stricken stupor at the sacrilegious holocaust which was slowly devouring the martyred *staretz*, friend of the Tsar and Tsarina, the *Bojy tchelloviek*, "Man of God."

When the flames had done their work, the soldiers collected the ashes of the corpse and buried them under the snow.

The authors of this gruesome epilogue were anticipated by Italy in the Middle Ages; the human imagination cannot go on indefinitely renewing the forms in which its passions and visions find expression.

In the year 1266 Manfred (bastard of the Emperor Frederick II, usurper-King of the Two Sicilies) murderer, perjurer, simoniac, heretic, with every crime on his soul and excommunicated by the Church, perished while warring with Charles of Anjou on the banks of the Calore, near Beneventum.

His captains and soldiers, who worshipped him for his youth, beauty, open-heartedness and charm, buried him with touching affection on the very spot where he fell.

But a year later, Pope Clement IV decreed that the pontifical process of execration and excommunication should be continued against a monster unworthy to rest in consecrated ground. On his orders, the Archbishop of Cosenza had the body exhumed and over the unrecognizable remains pronounced the pitiless sentences which consign the outcast to Hell: *In ignem æternum judicamus*. . . . The ceremony took place at night, by the light of torches which were extinguished one by one until darkness was complete, when what was left of Manfred was cut in pieces and scattered far and wide.

This tragic and picturesque scene deeply moved contemporary Italy and in fact gave Dante the inspiration for one of the finest passages in the *Divina Commedia*. Ascending the steep mountain of Purgatory, the poet sees the phantom of the young prince approaching him. It calls to him and says: "I am Manfred. My sins were horrible. But the infinite goodness of God has arms long enough to clasp all who turn towards it. If the spiritual father of Cosenza who was sent by Clement to scatter my bones had seen God's face of pity, my bones would be still at the end of the bridge near Beneventum, guarded by a heavy stone. And now the rains soak them and the winds play with them on the banks of the river where the



Archbishop and his priests had them tossed after the torches were extinguished. But their denunciations make no man so lost that the divine love cannot restore him, so long as hope retains a single green branch within him."

I should like to offer that quotation to the poor captive Tsarina.

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*Saturday, March 24, 1917.*

The *Soviet* has heard that the King of England is offering the Emperor and Empress the hospitality of British territory. At the bidding of the "Maximalists" the Provisional Government has had to pledge its word to keep the fallen sovereigns in Russia. The *Soviet* has gone further and appointed a commissary to "supervise the detention of the imperial family."

Yesterday evening, the Central Committee of the *Soviet* adopted the following motions :

1. Negotiations with the working-men of the enemy countries to be opened at once ;
2. "Systematic fraternization" between Russian and enemy soldiers at the front ;
3. Democratization of the army ;
4. All schemes of conquest to be abandoned.

What a fine time we are in for !

At six o'clock I went to the Marie Palace with my colleagues Buchanan and Carlotti to go through the official recognition of the Provisional Government.

The appearance of the beautiful building which was once presented by Nicholas I to his favourite daughter, the Duchess of Leuchtenburg, and subsequently became the seat of the Council of Empire, has already changed. In the vestibule, where the lackeys, resplendent in their Court livery, used to lounge, unkenpt, unwashed soldiers were sprawling over the seats, smoking with an insolent leer. The great marble stair-cases have never been swept since the revolution. Here and there a broken window

or the mark of a bullet on a panel showed that there had been hot work on Saint Isaac Square.

No one was there to receive us, though what we were about to do was an act of state.

Then and there I could not help thinking of a ceremony "in the august presence of His Majesty the Emperor." How perfect the arrangements! What pomp and pageantry! What a turn-out of the official hierarchy! If Baron Korff, Grand Master of the Ceremonies, or his acolytes, Tolstoy, Evreinov and Kurakin, could have seen us at that moment, they would have fainted with shame.

Miliukov came forward; he took us to a room, then another, then a third, not knowing where to stop and groping for the switch to turn on the light.

"Here we are at last. . . I think this will suit us all right."

He went off to find his colleagues, who came at once. They were all in working dress, carrying their portfolios under their arms.

Following Buchanan and Carlotti, who are senior to me, I made the sacramental declaration:

"I have the honour to tell you, gentlemen, that the Government of the French Republic recognizes in you the Provisional Government of Russia."

I then followed the example of my English and Italian colleagues by addressing a few heartfelt words to the new ministers; I emphasized the necessity of continuing the war to the bitter end.

Miliukov replied with a most reassuring declaration.

His speech was long enough to give me an opportunity of studying these improvised masters of Russia on whose shoulders rests such a terrible burden of responsibility. Patriotism, intelligence and honesty could be read on every face; but they seemed utterly worn out with physical fatigue and anxiety. The task they have undertaken is patently beyond their powers. Heaven grant that they do not collapse under it too soon! One alone among them appeared to be a man of action—the Minister of Justice, Kerensky. He is thirty-five, thin, of medium height, clean shaven; with his bristling hair, waxen

complexion and half-closed eyes (through which he darted sharp and uneasy glances) he struck me all the more because he kept apart, standing behind all his colleagues. He is obviously the most original figure of the Provisional Government and seems bound to become its main spring.

One of the most characteristic features of the revolution which has just overthrown tsarism is the immediate and total void created around the threatened sovereigns.

The moment collisions with the mob took place, all the regiments of the Guard, including the magnificent Cossacks of the Escort, betrayed their oath of fealty. Nor has a single Grand Duke risen to defend the sacred person of the monarchs: one of them actually placed his unit at the service of the rebels even before the Emperor's abdication. In fact, with a few exceptions which are all the more creditable, there has been wholesale desertion on the part of the court crowd and all those *pridvornny*, high officers and dignitaries who, amidst the pomp and pageantry of ceremonies and processions, seemed to be the natural guardians of the throne and the appointed defenders of imperial majesty. Yet many of them were under not only a moral but a military obligation of the strictest sort to rally round their threatened sovereigns at once, devote their lives to their safety and at least to stand by them in their hour of adversity.

This was all brought home to me again when I was dining privately with Madame R—— this evening. By birth or employment all the guests, a dozen or so, held high positions under the vanished regime.

At table the conversations *à deux* very quickly petered out and a general discussion on the subject of Nicholas II began. In spite of his present misery and the terrifying prospects of his immediate future, the company passed the severest judgments upon all the acts of his reign; he was overwhelmed with a torrent of reproach, for old and recent grievances. And when I expressed regret at seeing him so speedily abandoned by his family, guard and court, Madame R—— fired up:

"But it's *he* who has abandoned us! He has betrayed us; he has failed in all his obligations, and he alone has made it impossible for us to defend him! Neither his family, nor his guard nor his court has failed him: it is he who has failed all his people!"

The French *émigrés* talked in exactly the same strain in 1791; they too considered that Louis XVI, having betrayed the royal cause, had only himself to blame for his misfortunes. His arrest, after the flight to Varennes, affected them hardly at all. To one of the exceptions, who was much upset by the occurrence, a Brussels Inn-keeper made the following remark:

"Don't worry, Sir; this arrest is not such a great misfortune after all. Monsieur le Comte d'Artois certainly looked rather unhappy this morning, but the other gentlemen in his carriage seemed quite pleased."

\* \* \*

*Sunday, March 25, 1917.*

I had recently been thinking of giving a luncheon to the Provisional Government, with an idea of getting into more personal touch with its members and giving public proof of our approval.

But before issuing my invitations I thought it prudent to have some of the ministers discreetly sounded on the subject. How thankful I am that I did!

P——, who was commissioned to do the reconnoitring, told me to-day that ministers were much touched by my kindly intentions but they feared they might be misinterpreted in extremist quarters and begged me to leave the matter over for the present.

This detail will suffice to show how timid the Provisional Government is in dealing with the *Soviet* and how reluctant to commit itself in favour of the Alliance and the war!

I must add that to the glowing and patriotic appeal which the French socialists addressed to their Russian comrades on the 18th March, Kerensky has just replied with a telegram which I hope will cure the "French democracy" of any illusion whatever as to the "Russian

"democracy's" ideas on the subject of the Alliance and the war.\*

The Provisional Government have informed the *Soviet* that, with the approval of Buchanan, they have not given the Emperor the telegram in which King George offers the imperial family the hospitality of British territory.

But the executive committee of the *Soviet* still has its doubts and has posted "revolutionary" guards at Tsarskoie-Selo and on the roads leading from it, to prevent any surreptitious abduction of the sovereigns.

\* \* \*

Monday, March 26, 1917.

Alexander Nicolaïevitch Benois, the painter and historian of art and a friend of whom I see quite a good deal, has given me an unexpected call.

Descended from a French family which settled in Russia somewhere about 1820, he is the most cultivated man whom I know here, and one of the most distinguished.

I have spent many a delightful hour in his Vassili-Ostrov studio, talking with him *de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis*. Even from a political point of view, his conversation has often been valuable to me, as he is on

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\*Telegram from the Russian Minister of Justice, sent to Jules Guesde, member of the French Chamber of Deputies, Paris :

*I am deeply moved by the fraternal greetings which you, and comrades Marcel Sembat and Albert Thomas, have just sent me.*

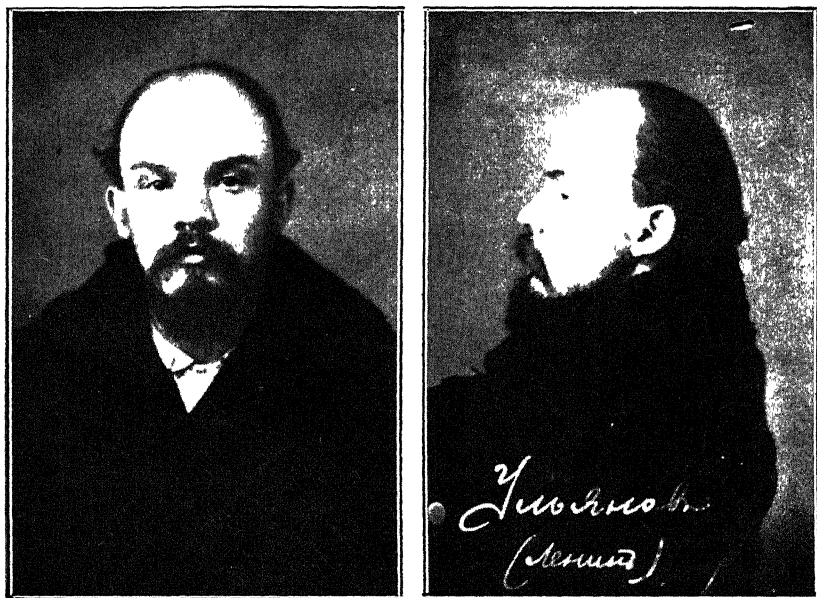
*We have never doubted that in our struggle we should have the whole-hearted sympathy and moral support of French socialism.*

*The Russian people is free. Thanks to the sacrifices made by the working-classes and the revolutionary army, an end has been made of that Russian tsarism which throughout the ages was the bulwark of universal reaction. Thenceforth the nation itself will shape its own destinies.*

*The Russian socialists, who warmly greet the heroic efforts of republican and democratic France to defend her native soil, and being as one man in their determination to continue the war to a conclusion worthy of democracy, have faith in the power of the international solidarity of the working classes to triumph over violent and reactionary imperialism and to bring in its train that peace which is so necessary to the development of human personality.*

A. KERENSKY,

Minister of Justice, Vice-President of the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.



ULIANOV, *alias* LENIN  
(From photographs in the archives of the *Okhrana*)



terms of close friendship not only with the élite of the artists, men of letters and university professors but also with the chief leaders of the liberal opposition and the "Cadet" party. Many a time have I obtained from him interesting information about those circles the *entrée* to which was formerly very difficult, and in fact almost closed to me. His personal opinions, which are always judicious and far-sighted, are all the more valuable in my eyes because he is eminently representative of that active and well-informed class of professors, savants, doctors, artists, men of letters and publicists which is styled the *intelligentzia*.

He came to see me about three o'clock, just as I was preparing to go out.

He looked grave and sat down with a weary sigh :

"Forgive me if I inconvenience you, but yesterday evening some of my friends and I were indulging in such gloomy reflections that I couldn't help coming to tell you about them."

Then he gave me a vivid and, alas, only too accurate picture of the effects of anarchy on the people, the prevailing apathy of the governing classes and the loss of discipline in the army. He ended with the observation :

"However painful such an admission must be to me, I feel I'm only doing my duty in coming to tell you that the war cannot go on. Peace must be made at the earliest possible moment. Of course, I realize that the honour of Russia is involved in her alliances, and you know me well enough to allow that I appreciate the full meaning of that aspect. But necessity is the law of history. No one is compelled to do the impossible !"

My answer was as follows :

"This is a very serious statement you are making. In disproving it I will adopt a strictly practical point of view—as any impartial and disinterested third party might do—and leave out of account the moral judgment France would have the right to pass on Russia. In the first place, you should know that, whatever may happen, France and England will carry on the war to complete victory. Defection on the part of Russia would probably



prolong the struggle, but would not change the result. However rapid the dissolution of your army might be, Germany would not dare to strip your front at once; she would also require a substantial force to secure further pledges on your territory. The twenty or thirty divisions she might be in a position to withdraw from the eastern front to reinforce her western front would not be sufficient to save her from defeat. Secondly, you may be quite sure that the moment Russia betrays her allies, they will repudiate her. Germany will thus have full licence to seek compensation at your expense for the sacrifices imposed on her elsewhere. I certainly do not imagine that you are founding any hopes on the magnanimity of William II. . . . You will therefore lose—as a minimum—Courland, Lithuania, Poland, Galicia and Bessarabia, to say nothing of your prestige in the East and your designs on Constantinople. And don't forget that France and England have in hand some tremendous "pledges" for bargaining purposes with Germany: the mastery of the seas, the German colonies, Mesopotamia and Salonica. Your allies also have the power of the purse which is about to be doubled, if not tripled by the help of the United States. We shall thus be in a position to continue the war for as long as is necessary. So, whatever the difficulties that face you at the moment, summon up all your energy and think of nothing but the war. What is at stake is not only the honour of Russia but her prosperity, her greatness and possibly her national existence itself."

He continued :

"There's no reply to you, alas! Yet we simply cannot continue the war! Honestly, we simply cannot!"

And with those words he left me, the tears standing in his eyes. I have met with the same pessimism on all sides during the last few days.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, March 27, 1917.*

As early as the 14th March, *i.e.*, even before the abdication of the Emperor and the formation of the Provisional

Government, the *Soviet* issued under the form of a *prikaz* an Order of the Day to the army, inviting the troops to proceed at once to the election of representatives to the Council of Deputies and Soldiers. This *prikaz* further decreed that in each regiment a committee should be elected to seize and supervise the use of all arms, rifles, guns, machine guns, armoured cars, etc. . . . ; in any case, the use of these arms was no longer to depend upon the will of the officers. The *prikaz* wound up by abolishing all outward signs of rank and prescribing that "any difference of opinion between officers and men" should henceforth be settled by the company committees. This fine document, which bore the signatures of Sokolov, Nachamkitz and Skobelev, was telegraphed the same evening to all the armies at the front. As a matter of fact, it would not have been possible to send it had not the mutineers seized the military telegraph offices at the very outset.

The moment Gutchkov was installed at the War Ministry, he tried to persuade the *Soviet* to withdraw the extraordinary *prikaz* which involved nothing less than the destruction of all discipline in the army.

After prolonged negotiations, the *Soviet* has consented to declare that for the time being the *prikaz* shall not apply to the fighting armies. But the moral effect of its publication still remains, and judging by the latest telegrams from General Alexeïev indiscipline is spreading to an alarming degree among the troops at the front.

How grievous to think that the Germans are only eighty kilometres from Paris !

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, March 28, 1917.*

There is a fresh manifesto from the *Soviet*, addressed this time "to the peoples of the universe." It is a long rigmarole of emphatic statements, one long messianic dithyramb :

*We, the workmen and soldiers of Russia, announce to you the great event of the Russian revolution, and we send*

*you greetings of fire. . . Our victory is a great victory of universal freedom and democracy. . . . And we address ourselves first to you, proletarian brothers of the Germanic coalition. Follow our example and shake off the yoke of your semi-autocratic power; refuse to be any longer an instrument of conquest in the hands of your kings, landlords, bankers, etc.*

I await the reply of the Teutonic proletariat.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, March 29, 1917.*

Since the wreck of tsarism, all the metropolitans, archbishops, archimandrites, abbots, archpriests, and hieromonachs of whom Rasputin had formed his ecclesiastical clientèle have been having a very uncomfortable time. They have everywhere seen not only the revolutionary gang but their own flocks, and often enough even their subordinates, rise up against them. Most of them have resigned their offices, more or less spontaneously: many are in flight or in prison.

After being under arrest for a short time, the Metropolitan of Petrograd, Monsignor Pitirim, has obtained leave to go and expiate his offences in a Siberian monastery.

The same fate has befallen the Metropolitan of Moscow, Monsignor Macarius; the Archbishop of Kharkov, Monsignor Antoine; the Archbishop of Tobolsk, Monsignor Varnava; the Bishop of Tchernigov, Monsignor Basil, and others.

\* \* \*

*Friday, March 30, 1917.*

The most dangerous germ involved in the revolution has been developing during the last few days with the most alarming rapidity.

Finland, Livonia, Esthonia, Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Georgia and Siberia, are demanding their independence, or, failing that, complete autonomy.

That Russia is doomed to federalism is highly probable.

She is predestined to that development by the enormous size of her territories, the diversity of her races and the increasing complexity of her interests. But the present movement is separatist much more than particularist, secessionist rather than federalist ; it tends to nothing less than national disintegration. So the *Soviet* gives it its full blessing. As if the visionaries and lunatics of the Tauride Palace would not be tempted to destroy in a few weeks the historic work of ten centuries !

The French Revolution began by proclaiming the *Republic one and indivisible*. To that principle it sacrificed thousands of heads, and French unity was saved. The Russian revolution has taken for its motto *Russia dissolved and dismembered*.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, March 31, 1917.*

Anarchist propaganda has already contaminated the larger part of the front.

From all quarters I am receiving reports of scenes of mutiny, the murder of officers and wholesale desertion. Even in the front line bands of private soldiers are leaving their units to go and see what is happening in Petrograd or at home in their villages.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, April 1, 1917.*

General Kornilov, the new Military Governor of Petrograd, is endeavouring gradually to resume control of the troops of the garrison. The task is all the more arduous because most of the officers have been killed, degraded or forced to fly. He has ordered a review on the Winter Palace Square for this morning and, very judiciously, has selected only the best elements, those units in which discipline has suffered least. Since the fall of the imperial regime, it is the first time that a substantial force has been assembled in regular formation.

From the windows of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs I saw the review with Buchanan and Neratov.

The troops—ten thousand men or so—had a tolerable soldierly bearing and marched past in good order. There

were very few officers. All the bands played the *Marseillaise*, but at a slow pace which made it sound sinister. In each company and squadron I noticed several red banners bearing inscriptions: *Land and Liberty! . . . The Land for the People! . . . Long live the Social Republic! . . .* On a very small number I read: *The War until Victory!* Above the Winter Palace floated an enormous red flag.

The spectacle was singularly instructive. From the military point of view, I could condense my ideas thus: a force in which the spirit of discipline has not wholly disappeared but which is thinking less of its military duties than of its hopes of political and social reform.

From the historical and picturesque aspect, I was obsessed by a vivid contrast. I reminded Buchanan and Neratov of the afternoon of the 2nd August, 1914, and that majestic scene when the Emperor appeared on the balcony of this same palace after swearing on the gospel and the holy ikons that he would not sign peace so long as a single enemy soldier stood on Russian soil. In that solemn hour I was at his side: he was grave but smiling. The great square was packed with people—even more so than this morning—soldiers, bourgeois, workmen, *moujiks*, women, children: and the whole crowd on its knees to receive the blessing of its father the Tsar, sang the hymn, *Bojé tsaria kranié*.

*O temps évanouis, ô splendeurs éclipsées,  
O soleils descendus derrière l'horizon!*

A consignment of newspapers, the latest of which is eleven days old, has reached me from Paris and strengthens me in a view I took on reading the daily résumés transmitted by telegraph. The French public is enthusiastic for the Russian revolution! Once again our press will have been found wanting in moderation and judgment. I admit of course that as the disappearance of Tsarism is an accomplished fact, we were unquestionably obliged to adapt ourselves to the new state of affairs and to "put a good face on a bad business." It was therefore right and proper that French opinion should appear to receive

the Russian revolution with confidence and sympathy. But for Heaven's sake no *hosannabs*! The *Soviet* is quite puffed up enough already. These pæans of praise and admiration will turn its head completely. The main fault is evidently that of the censorship which ought to have moderated the zeal of the sycophants.

From a personal letter which the same messenger has brought me I also learn that in the corridors of the Chamber and newspaper offices—and among polite society—the honour of having brought about the revolution is attributed to Sir George Buchanan, his purpose being to put an end to German intrigues. The suggestion is false. Criticisms of myself are appended, as might be expected; men recall that in the old days French diplomacy did not hesitate to resort to great methods on great occasions and did not allow itself to be checked by any vain respect for the principle of legitimacy. My behaviour is being contrasted with the example of my famous predecessor the Marquis de la Chétardie, who in 1741 had no hesitation in associating himself boldly with the national party in destroying German influence and placing Elizabeth Petrovna on the imperial throne.

Before long it will be realized that the revolution is the most damaging blow that could have been inflicted on Russian nationalism.

This evening, one of my guests at dinner was Prince Scipio Borghese, formerly a radical deputy at the Montecitorio, who has just arrived in Petrograd with his daughter, pretty Princess Santa; both are very open-minded and of many-sided intellect and they are anxious to see a revolution—and what a revolution!—at close quarters. My other guests were M. and Madame Polovtsov, Princess Sophie Dolgorouki, Count Sergei Kutusov, Count Nani Mocenigo, Poklevski, etc. . . .

I spoke of the favourable impression made upon me by this morning's review. On the other side of the scale, Polovtsov and Poklevski told me of the deplorable news they have received from the front.

Prince Borghese, with whom I had a long talk after

dinner, asked me what characteristics had struck me most in the Russian revolutions, meaning the characteristics which in my opinion distinguish it most forcibly from Western revolutions. I replied :

“ First of all you must realize that the Russian revolution has barely begun and that certain forces which are destined to play a tremendous part in it, forces such as land hunger, ethnical antagonisms, social disintegration, the economic *débâcle* and anti-Jewish passion, are so far at work only in theory. With that reservation, what strikes me most is this ” :

And I illustrated the following points with various examples :

(1) The fundamental psychological difference between the Latin or Anglo-Saxon revolution and the Slav revolution. The imagination of either of the former is logical and constructive ; he destroys to build a new edifice, every part of which he has contemplated and thought out. The imagination of the latter is simply destructive and dispersive ; his visions are the very essence of the indefinite.

(2) Eight-tenths of the Russian population cannot read or write, a fact which makes the audiences at public meetings and gatherings particularly responsive to the power of eloquence and the action of the leaders.

(3) Weakness of will is endemic in Russia ; all Russian literature goes to prove it. Russians are incapable of persevering in any one course. The war of 1812 was comparatively short. The present war, with its length and its horrors, is too much for the staying power of the national temperament.

(4) Anarchy, with all that it implies in the way of extravagance, sloth and vacillation, is an inebriating passion to a Russian. It also gives him an excuse for endless public demonstrations, in which he satisfies his craving for spectacular and emotional display and his keen instinct for poetry and beauty.

(5) Lastly, the enormous area of the country makes each province a centre of separatism and each town a nucleus

of anarchy; the slight authority still possessed by the Provisional Government is thereby totally paralysed.

"But what is the remedy?" Borghese asked.

"The socialists of the allied countries must show their comrades of the *Soviet* that the political and social conquests of the revolution are lost unless Russia is first saved."

\* \* \*

Monday, April 2, 1917.

A telegram from Paris informs me that Albert Thomas, the Minister of Munitions, is about to be sent to Petrograd on a special mission. His patriotism, brains, application, sense of practical reality and instinct of orderliness, combined with his socialist convictions, seem to me to make him better fitted than anyone else to impress certain home truths on the Provisional Government and the *Soviet*. He will also see the Russian revolution at close quarters and will damp down the strange chorus of flattery and praise it has called forth in France.

This evening I dined quite quietly with Princess Gortchakov.

Low spirits prevailed. The conversation halted. We were all absorbed in our own thoughts which were depressing enough. B—— alone was talkative, and as usual he translated his pessimism into sarcasm.

"What joy and pride is mine when I go for a stroll in town in these times," he burst out. "I'm always murmuring: henceforth all these *dvorniks*, *izvoitchiks* and *rabotchiks* are my brothers! This morning I passed a gang of drunken soldiers: I wanted to clasp them to my bosom!"

Turning to Prince Gortchakov, he continued:

"Don't lose any time in renouncing your wealth, Michael Constantinovitch! Enter honestly and wholeheartedly into the holy state of poverty! Give your estates to the nation and give them quickly, before it takes them from you! Look to poverty and liberty for your happiness henceforth!"



This caustic irony was little to the taste of his audience.

Talking more soberly, B—— discussed with me the general situation in Russia, the broad currents which can gradually be distinguished and the formidable prospects opening on all sides. We passed in review the political, social, economic, religious and ethnical problems with which the Russian nation is now faced, including of course the terrifying problem of the war which involves the very existence of Russia :

"I foresee a long period of anarchy," I said. "And after that a dictatorship."

"Yes," replied B——. "A new era has just begun in the history of Russia, the Spanish-American . . . . Sorfirio Diaz, when may we expect you ?"

I told him incidentally that since Sunday, the 25th March, the *Domine, saluum fac imperatorem nostrum Nicolaum* had ceased to be sung in Notre Dame de France. We ended with the *Domine, saluam fac Rempublicam* and were waiting for the new form of prayer for the Government sprung from the revolution.

"The form is easy enough to draft," B—— replied : "*Domine, saluam fac crapulam nostra ruthenam !*"

\* \* \*

Tuesday, April 3, 1917.

Miliukov is greatly concerned at what is happening at Cronstadt, the great naval fortress which commands the approach to Petrograd from the Gulf of Finland.

The town (its population is about 55,000) refuses to recognize the authority either of the Provisional Government or the *Soviet*. The troops of the garrison, which consists of not less than 20,000 men, are in open revolt.

After massacring half their officers, they are keeping two hundred of them as hostages and forcing them to do the most degrading tasks, such as sweeping the streets and heavy navvy work.

Anarchy also reigns at Helsingfors.

At Schlusselfburg the town is in the hands of a commune in full revolt, whose first act has been to make friends with a gang of German prisoners of war. At the

request of this gang, sixty Alsace-Lorraine prisoners, for whom I had secured special treatment, have been kept in close confinement.

At five o'clock I went to see the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch in his palace, which is full of Napoleonic relics. It is the first time I have had the chance of a talk with him since the revolution.

He affected an optimism to which silence was my only reply. But he certainly carried it no further than the occasion warranted and, to prevent me thinking that he was entirely hoodwinked by the course of events, he concluded with this cautious reservation:

"As long as sensible and patriotic men like Prince Lvov, Miliukov and Gutchkov are at the head of the government, I shall be hopeful enough. If they fall, we are in for a leap into the unknown."

"In the first chapter of Genesis that 'unknown' is given a specific name."

"Really! What?"

"The *Johu-bobu*, which means 'chaos.'"

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, April 4, 1917*

The Minister of Justice, Kerensky, yesterday paid a visit to Tsarkoïe-Selo to see for himself the arrangements made for guarding the ex-sovereigns. He found everything in order.

Count Benckendorff, Grand Marshal of the Court; Prince Dolgorukov, Marshal of the Court; Madame Naryschkin, Mistress of the Robes; Mlles. de Buxhoevden and Hendrikov, Maids of Honour, and the Tsarevitch's tutor, Gilliard, are sharing their monarchs' captivity. Madame Virubova, who was also residing in the Alexander Palace, has been forcibly removed and confined in the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul—in the famous Trubetzkoi bastion.

Kerensky had a talk with the Emperor. In particular he asked him whether it were true, as the German papers have reported, that William II had frequently advised him to adopt a more liberal policy.

"Quite the reverse!" the Emperor protested. The conversation continued for some time and was marked by greatest courtesy. In fact, Kerensky ultimately succumbed to the affability which is Nicholas II's natural charm and several times caught himself addressing him as *Gosoudar* (Sire)!

But the Empress was as frigid as she could be.

Madame Virubova's departure has not affected her, at any rate in the way that might have been expected. After all her passionate and jealous attachment to her, she has suddenly made her responsible for all the evils which have overtaken the Russian imperial family:

*La détestable C  none a conduit tout le reste !*

\* \* \*

Thursday, April 5, 1917.

I have sent Ribot the following telegram:

*Some of the Petrograd papers have reproduced an article in the Radical pointing out the necessity of changing the representative of the Republic in Russia. It is not for me to take the initiative in expressing my desires in this matter. Your Excellency knows me well enough to be sure that in circumstances such as these personal considerations do not count with me at all. But the article in the Radical makes it incumbent upon me to tell you that, having had the signal honour of representing Petrograd in France for more than three years and being conscious that I have spared no effort in that service, I should feel it no hardship to be relieved of my heavy task, and should the Government of the Republic think it desirable to appoint a successor, I should do everything in my power to make the change a simple matter.*

The telegram has been inspired by several considerations.

In the first place, there may be an official advantage in my being relieved of my post: I enjoyed the confidence of the old regime and I simply do not believe in the new one. And then, even from here I can guess what a campaign the advanced parties in the Chamber must be carrying on against me. If I am to be recalled, I should

at least prefer to take the initiative : I have always seen the force of Sainte-Beuve's aphorism that " You want to leave things just a little before they leave you."

To-day there has been a great ceremony on the Champ-de-Mars, where the victims of the revolutionary rising, the " nation's heroes " and " martyrs to liberty," have been given a state burial.

A long grave has been dug in the transverse axis of the parade-ground. In the centre a platform, draped in red, was raised to serve as vantage-point for the members of the Government.

Since early morning, huge and interminable processions, headed by military bands and carrying black banners, threaded their way through the streets of the city to collect from the hospitals the two hundred and ten coffins destined for revolutionary apotheosis.

On the most modest estimate, the number of demonstrators exceeded nine hundred thousand. Yet there was neither confusion nor delay at any point on the route. In their formation, marching, stops and singing all the processions kept perfect order. In spite of the icy wind, I was curious to see them manœuvre across the Champ-de-Mars. Under a snow-laden and wind-lashed sky, these endless crowds, which filed slowly past with their red coffins, presented an amazingly impressive spectacle, and to heighten the tragic effect the guns of the Fortress boomed at one-minute intervals. The art of *mise en scène* is native to the Russians.

But what struck me most was the absence of one element from the ceremony—the clergy. No priests, no ikons, no prayers, no crosses. The only anthem was *The Workmen's Marseillaise*.

Since the archaic age of Saint Olga and Saint Vladimir, and indeed since the Russian people first appeared in the light of history, it is the first time that a great national act has been performed without the help of the Church. It is but a short while since religion was still guiding and controlling all public and private life ; it intervened incessantly with its pomp and pageantry, its dazzling ascendancy, its unchallenged domination of imagination

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and heart, if not of reason and soul. Only a few days ago, all the thousands of soldiers and workmen whom I saw marching past me could not see the smallest ikon in the street without stopping, lifting their caps and crossing themselves fervently. What a contrast was presented to-day! But why should one be surprised? In the field of ideas, the Russian always rushes to the extreme and the absolute.

Slowly the Champ-de-Mars emptied itself. The light waned; a dismal and icy mist rose from the Neva. The square, deserted once more, became desolate and sinister. As I returned to the Embassy by the solitary paths of the Summer Garden, I reflected that I had perhaps witnessed one of the most considerable events in modern history. For what has been buried in the red coffins is the Byzantine and Muscovite tradition of the Russian people, nay the whole past of orthodox Holy Russia.

\* \* \*

*Friday, April 6, 1917.*

While the troops at the front are melting away at an increasing rate, as the result of socialist propaganda, the little army which is fighting under the orders of General Baratov on the borders of Kurdistan is valiantly persevering in its stiff task.

After occupying Kirmanshal and Kizilraba, it has just entered Mesopotamia and effected its junction with the English to the north-east of Bagdad.

In the general schemes of the war, this brilliant operation is obviously but an episode; but quite possibly it is the last exploit which historians will have to record in the military annals of Russia.

CHAPTER XI  
APRIL 7—21, 1917.



## CHAPTER XI

APRIL 7—21, 1917.

The United States of America declares war on Germany.—A concert at the Marie Theatre on behalf of the victims of the revolution ; Siberian exiles in the imperial box.—Public feeling revolts against the recent ceremony in the Champ-de-Mars : funeral orations pronounced over the graves of the victims.—Russian patriotism vanishes : "The war is dead."—Acrimonious disputes between the Provisional Government and the *Soviet* on the subject of "war aims."—Life of the fallen sovereigns at Tsarskoïe-Selo ; a closer guard kept : the Emperor is imperturbable, the Empress resigned.—Three French socialist deputies, Montet, Cachin and Lafont arrive in Petrograd.—Easter Sunday : curious appearance of the churches.—The French socialist deputies get such a frigid reception from the *Soviet* that their hearts fail them and they dare not assert France's right to the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine.—Arrival of the "maximalist," Lenin, in Petrograd.—Illusions of the French socialist deputies about the natural tendencies and guiding forces of the Russian revolutions : our discussions of the subject.—Lenin's growing ascendancy ; his antecedents, character and ideas.

*Saturday, April 7, 1917.*

Yesterday the United States of America declared war on Germany.

Miliukov and I congratulated each other on this event which deprives the Teutonic powers of their last chance of salvation. I impressed upon him that the Provisional Government should spread far and wide the splendid message which President Wilson has just addressed to Congress and which ends thus :

*It is not possible to remain neutral when the peace of the world and the liberty of the nations are at stake. We are thus compelled to join battle with the natural enemy of peace and liberty. To that we will sacrifice our lives, our fortunes, all that we possess, with the pride of knowing that the day has come in which America can give her blood for the nobler principles from which she has sprung.*

While the American democracy is speaking in this lofty strain, the Russian revolution is about to complete



the destruction of the instinct of patriotic duty and national honour.

This afternoon, the Volhynian regiment, formerly a regiment of the Guard, which was the first to revolt on the 12th March and carried the rest of the garrison with it by its example, organized a concert at the Marie Theatre for the benefit of the victims of the revolution. An extremely polite invitation was sent to the ambassadors of France, England and Italy. We decided to turn up, to avoid the appearance of slighting the new regime; the Provisional Government was also present at the ceremony.

What an extraordinary change at the Marie Theatre! Would its clever stage-hands have succeeded in producing such an amazing transformation? All the imperial coats of arms and all the golden eagles have been removed. The box attendants had exchanged their sumptuous court liveries for miserable, dirty grey jackets.

The theatre was filled with an audience of bourgeois, students and soldiers. A military orchestra occupied the stage; the men of the Volhynian regiment stood in groups behind.

We were ushered into the box on the left which was formerly the box of the imperial family, and in which I have so often seen the Grand Duke Boris, the Grand Duke Dimitri and the Grand Duke Andrew applauding Kchechinskaïa, Karsavina, Spesivtsiava or Smirnova. Opposite us, in the Minister of the Court's box, all the ministers were gathered, wearing nothing more impressive than frock-coats. I could not help thinking of old Count Fredericks, with his blaze of orders and his exquisite courtesy, who is now kept a prisoner in a hospital, sorely stricken with a disease of the bladder and obliged to submit to the most humiliating attentions in the presence of two gaolers. My thoughts went also to his wife, the worthy Countess Hedwig-Aloïsovna, who sought refuge in my embassy and is on her deathbed in an isolation hospital; to General Voyeikov, Commandant of the Imperial Palaces, who is a prisoner in the Fortress, and to all the brilliant

aides-de-camp, *gardes-à-cheval* and knight-guards, who are now dead or in captivity or flight.

But the real interest of the audience was concentrated on the great imperial box in the centre, the gala box. It was occupied by some thirty persons, old gentlemen and several old ladies, with grave, worn, curiously expressive and unforgettable faces, who turned wondering eyes on the assembly. These were the heroes and heroines of terrorism who, scarcely three weeks ago, were living in exile in Siberia, or in the cells of Schlussemburg and the Fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. Morozov, Lopatin, Vera Figner, Catherine Ismailovitch, etc., were there. I shivered to think of all that the little party stood for in the way of physical suffering and moral torment, borne in silence and buried in oblivion. What an epilogue for Krapotkin's *Memoirs*, or Dostoievsky's *Memories of the House of the Dead*!

The concert began with *The Marseillaise*, which is now the Russian national anthem. The theatre almost collapsed under the cheers and shouts of "Long live the Revolution!" and "Long live France!" was occasionally sent in my direction.

Then we had a long speech from the Minister of Justice, Kerensky; it was a clever speech in which the subject of the war was wrapped up in socialist phraseology. The orator's style was incisive and jerky; his gestures were few, impatient and imperious. He had a *succès fou* which made his pale, drawn features seem to light up with satisfaction.

In the interval which followed, Buchanan said to me:

"Let's pay our respects to the Government box! It will look well."

At the end of the interval we returned to our box. A murmur of sympathy and something like concentration passed through the theatre; it was a sort of silent ovation.

Vera Figner had appeared on the stage, in the conductor's place.

She was utterly unaffected, her grey hair coiled round her head, dressed in a black woollen gown with a white fichu, and looking like a very distinguished old lady.

Nothing about her betrayed the fearsome nihilist she used to be in the days of her youth. She was of course of good family, connected with the nobility.

In calm, level tones, unaccompanied by any kind of gesture, and without a single outburst or the slightest trace of violence or emphasis, the acid note of vengeance or the pealing cry of victory, she reminded us of the countless army of obscure victims who have bought the present triumph of the revolution with their lives, all those nameless ones who have succumbed in state prisons or the penal settlements of Siberia. The list of martyrs came forth like a litany or a piece of recitative. The concluding phrases, uttered more slowly, struck an indescribable note of sadness, resignation and pity. Perhaps the Slav soul alone is capable of that intensity. A funeral march which the orchestra at once began seemed a continuation of the speech, the pathetic effect of which thus culminated in religious emotion. Most of those present were reduced to tears.

We took advantage of this general emotion to withdraw, as we were told that Cheïdze, the orator of the "Labour" group, was about to speak against the war and that heated disputes, etc. might be anticipated. It was time to go. Besides, the ceremony had made a peculiarly poignant impression upon us: we did not want to spoil it.

In the empty passages through which I hastened I seemed to see the ghosts of my smart women friends who had so often been here to lull their restless minds with the novelties of the ballet, and who were the last charm of a social system which has vanished for ever.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, April 8, 1917.*

The number of persons present last Thursday at the funeral ceremonies in the Champ-de-Mars has been calculated at nearly a million. The civil character of the obsequies has aroused no popular protest. The Cossacks alone had announced that their conscience did not allow them to take any part in a funeral at which the figure

of Christ was not displayed and they stayed at home in their barracks.

But next morning the humblest classes, especially the soldiers, began to experience an uneasy feeling, a feeling compounded of disapproval, remorse, vague alarm and superstitious forebodings. There could be no doubt now, they thought, that these obsequies, unhallowed by priest or ikon, were an act of sacrilege. God would be avenged ! Those Cossacks had known it all along ! They had refused to be involved in such a sinful enterprise. How sunning they are ! Besides, was it not doubly impious to have painted the coffins red ? There are only two Christian colours for coffins—white and yellow ; it is so well known that the catechism does not even mention it. So the dead have been profaned by that devilish novelty of painting the coffins red ! That was the last straw ! The entire ceremonial at the Champ-de-Mars must have been arranged by the Jews !

This revulsion of public feeling has become so general and outspoken that the Provisional Government has seen itself compelled to mollify it. Acting on its orders, a number of priests proceeded to the Champ-de-Mars yesterday and said prayers over the graves.

I dined this evening with Madame P——. There were about a dozen guests, all the closest of friends, and among them an aide-de-camp of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaïevitch, Prince Sergei B——, who has just come from the Caucasus.

Throughout the evening there was a general and highly animated conversation, in which all of us freely spoke our minds about the course of events. Of this frank and spontaneous exchange of ideas this is what I remember :

“The situation has become much worse in the last few days. The country, taken as a whole, would not agree to a peace of dishonour, such as a separate peace would be. But it has lost all interest in the war and thinks of nothing now but domestic questions and, first and foremost, the agrarian question. . . . It must frankly be admitted that henceforth there is no object in the war,

from the point of view of the Russian people. What about Constantinople, Santa Sophia and the Golden Horn? But who gives that fantastic notion a thought nowadays, except Miliukov, and he solely because he's an historian. What about Poland? Poland has ceased to be any concern of the Russian State since the Provisional Government proclaimed her independence. It's *her* business now to secure her territorial unity; in future she'll have to take *Polonia farà da se* for her motto. As for Lithuania, Courland and even Livonia, their future destinies are regarded with the most complete unconcern, on the pretext that they are not *Russian territories*. . . . The same note can be heard everywhere, in Moscow as in Petrograd, Kiev no less than Odessa; despondency and the effacement of all national and patriotic feeling is universal. Impressions of the army are equally discouraging. Among the garrisons in the interior there is nothing but hopeless indiscipline, idleness, absenteeism and desertion. Until quite lately the troops at the front had preserved an excellent spirit. The recent reverse on the Stochod has shown that even the troops in the front line have lost their *moral*, for there can be no doubt that one regiment refused to fight. And what is to be said of all the turmoil raging in the administrative departments, the transport, supply and munitions services?"

As I was endeavouring to argue against some of these pessimistic statements, Madame P—— replied:

"Don't make any mistake. The war is dead, for all the fine phraseology of official speeches. A miracle alone can galvanize it back to life!"

"May not that miracle come from Moscow?"

"Moscow's no better than Petrograd!"

\* \* \*

*Monday, April 9, 1917.*

A few days ago a hot dispute began between the Provisional Government and the *Soviet*, and more particularly between Miliukov and Kerensky, on the subject of "war aims."

The *Soviet* demands that the Government shall im-

mediately join with its allies in opening peace negotiations on the following basis : " No annexations, no indemnities, and the free development of the nations."

I fortified Miliukov to the best of my ability by pointing out that the *Soviet's* demands amount to the defection of Russia, and if that came to pass it would be an eternal disgrace to the Russian people :

" You have ten million men in arms," I said ; " you are supported by eight allies, most of whom have suffered more than you but are as determined as ever to fight on until complete victory. A ninth ally is about to join you, an ally who is indeed an ally ! America ! This terrible war was originally a fight for a Slav cause. France rushed to your assistance without a moment's haggling over the price of her help. And you're to be the first to withdraw from the contest ! "

" I'm so entirely in sympathy with your view," Miliukov protested, " that if the *Soviet* got its way I should resign my office at once ! "

A proclamation which the Provisional Government addresses to the Russian people and has published this morning tries to evade the difficulty by veiling its intention to continue the war in nebulous phrases.

When I pointed out the inconsistency and timorousness of these phrases to Miliukov, he replied :

" I think I achieved a great triumph in getting them inserted in the proclamation. We are obliged to tread very warily in dealing with the *Soviet* ; we cannot yet rely on the garrison to defend us."

Can it be that the *Soviet* is the master of Petrograd !

\* \* \*

Wednesday, April 11, 1917.

I had the leader of the " Cadet " party, Basil Maklakov, Princess Dolgoruky, Prince Scipio Borghese and Alexer Nicolaïevitch Benois, the painter and art critic, to lunch with me to-day. \*

Maklakov, who has seen as much of the revolution at close quarters as anyone, told us all about its beginnings.

" Not one of us," he said, " foresaw the immense scale

of the movement; no one expected such a cataclysm. Of course we knew that the imperial regime was rotten; but we never suspected that it was as rotten as it has proved to be. That's why nothing was ready. I was discussing it only yesterday with Maxim Gorky and Cheidze; they haven't recovered from the shock even yet."

"So this combustion of all Russia has been spontaneous?" asked Borghese.

"Yes, absolutely spontaneous."

I remarked that the same thing happened in February, 1848, when the triumph of the Revolution surprised no one more than the leaders of the Republican Party, Ledru-Rollin, Armand Marrast and Louis Blanc; I added:

"You can never predict the day and hour of an eruption of Vesuvius. You have done pretty well when you can recognize the premonitory signs, record the first seismic waves and announce that an eruption is inevitable and imminent. So much the worse for the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum who require more than that warning!" \*

At Tsarskoïe-Selo a closer watch is being kept over the fallen sovereigns.

The Emperor still presents an extraordinary spectacle of indifference and imperturbability. He spends, in his calm and casual way, his day skimming the papers, smoking cigarettes, doing puzzles, playing with his children and sweeping up snow in the garden. He seems to find a kind of relief in being at length free of the burden of supreme power.

Diocletian at Salona and Charles V at San Juste could not have shown greater serenity.

The Empress, on the other hand, has taken to mystical exaltation; she is always saying:

"It is God who has sent us this ordeal; I accept it thankfully for my eternal salvation."

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\* In 1917 the Russian socialists had the same shock as the French republicans in 1848. At a conference held in Paris on the 12th March, 1920, M. Kerensky said that his political friends had met at his house on March 10, 1917, and that they had unanimously come to the conclusion that a revolution was impossible in Russia. Two days later, tsarism was overthrown. (Cf. *Le Journal du Peuple*, March 14, 1920.)

But she cannot refrain from outbursts of indignation when she sees how strictly those orders are carried out which deprive the Emperor of all freedom of movement, even within the confines of the palace. Sometimes a sentry refuses to allow him to pass into a gallery ; sometimes the officer on duty, at the end of a meal taken in common, gives him orders to retire to his room. Nicholas II always obeys, without a word of reproach. Alexandra Feodorovna rages and protests as if she had been insulted ; but she soon recovers her self-control and calms down, murmuring :

" We must submit to this too. . . . Did not Christ drink the cup to the very dregs ? "

\* \* \*

*Saturday, April 14, 1917.*

Three French socialist deputies, Montet, Cachin and Lafont, arrived from Paris yesterday evening, travelling via Bergen and Tornea ; they have come to preach wisdom and patriotism to the *Soviet*. They are accompanied by two members of the British Labour Party, O'Grady and Thorne.

Montet is a barrister ; Cachin and Lafont are professors of philosophy ; O'Grady is a cabinet-maker ; Thorne, a plumber. French socialism is thus represented by intellectuals with a classical education, English socialism by manual workers, "matter-of-fact men." Theory on one side, practice on the other.

My three compatriots presented themselves at my office this morning. My first impressions of them left nothing to be desired. We were absolutely at one about the task that lies before them here. Their main anxiety was to know whether Russia is capable of continuing the war and if we can still rely on her for an effort which will enable us to secure our terms of peace. I told them that if they could win the confidence of the *Soviet*, speak to it kindly but firmly and succeed in convincing it that the fate of the revolution is bound up with the result of the war, the Russian army would again become an important factor—a factor of mass, if not of shock, in our strategic



plans. As regards our peace programme, we must obviously adapt it to the new aspects of the problem. In the West I saw no reason for abandoning our claims or modifying our hopes, as American help must necessarily more or less compensate us for the diminished value of Russia's aid. But in eastern Europe and Asia Minor we should doubtless have to sacrifice something of our ambitions; but I also thought that if we set about the matter in the right way and our diplomacy carried out the manœuvre which will sooner or later be forced on us, in time that sacrifice would not cost France too much. They said they entirely agreed with me.

At one o'clock they came to lunch, as a family party, at the Embassy. All that they told me about the state of public feeling in France is quite satisfactory.

Seeing them thus under my roof, I could not help thinking what a strange and paradoxical spectacle their presence here presents. For the last five-and-twenty years the Socialist Party has never ceased in its attacks on the Franco-Russian alliance. And now we see three socialist deputies coming to defend it—against Russia!

When they left me, they went to the Champ-de-Mars to lay a wreath on the grave of the victims of the revolution, just as in the old days the envoys of the French Republic used to go to the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul to place a wreath on the tomb of Alexander III. As Sainte-Beuve wrote: "Life is nothing but seeing everything and the reverse of everything."

\* \* \*

*Sunday, April 15, 1917.*

According to the orthodox calendar, to-day is Easter Sunday. Not a single incident or innovation has marked Holy Week, except that the theatres, which formerly closed their doors for the whole of the last fortnight of Lent, remained open until last Wednesday.

To-night all the churches of Petrograd have celebrated the solemn office of the Resurrection with the usual splendour. In the absence of the Metropolitan Pitirim, who is now a prisoner in his Siberian monastery, the

pontifical mass was said at the Lavra of Saint Alexander Nevsky by Monsignor Tikhon, Archbishop of Yaroslavl, while the two episcopal vicars, Monsignor Ghennadius and Monsignor Benjamin, officiated at Saint Isaac and Our Lady of Kazan. The crowds which thronged these great cathedrals have been as large as in former years.

I paid a visit to Our Lady of Kazan and saw the same scenes as in the days of tsarism, the same majesty and magnificence, the same display of liturgical pomp. But never before had I beheld such an intense revelation of Russian piety. Nearly all the faces around me wore a positively thrilling look of fervent pleading or prostrate resignation. At the supreme moment of the office, when the clergy came through the iconostasis in a blaze of gold and the hymn of triumph, *Praise to the Holy Trinity! Eternal Praise! Our Saviour Christ is risen!* rang out, a wave of emotion swept over the worshippers. And while they embraced each other, in the customary fashion with murmurs of *Christ is risen!* I saw that many of them were dissolved in tears.

On the other hand, I am informed that in the working-class quarters of Kolomna, the Galernaïa and Viborg, several churches were practically empty.

The French socialist deputies and their English comrades were received by the *Soviet* this afternoon.

Their reception was frigid, so frigid that Cachin was completely taken aback and thought it his duty to make any sort of negotiation possible, to "throw out ballast." This "ballast" was nothing less than Alsace-Lorraine, the restoration of which to France was not asserted as a right but presented simply as a contingency, subject to all sorts of conditions, such as a plebiscite.

If that is all the help our deputies have come to bring me, they would have been better advised to spare themselves the trouble of the journey!

At the same sitting of the *Soviet*, Plekhanov, who arrived from Paris at the same time as the French and English delegates, reappeared before a Russian Assembly for the first time after forty years of exile.

Plekhanov is a noble figure in the revolutionary party and the founder of Russian social democracy. From him the Russian proletariat heard the first appeals for union and organization. He was therefore given a triumphal reception when he arrived at the Finland Station the night before last, and the Provisional Government went to welcome him officially.

He was also greeted with cheers from all sides when he entered the Tauride Palace to-day. But when he spoke of the war, when he proudly claimed the title of socialist-patriot and declared that he would not submit to the tyranny of the Hohenzollerns any more than to the despotism of the Romanovs, there was a gloomy stillness around him and then mutterings could be heard on several benches.

\* \* \*

*Monday, April 16, 1917.*

I asked the three socialist deputies to come and see me this morning and pointed out to them the danger of the far too conciliatory statements in which one of them indulged at the meeting of the *Soviet* yesterday. Cachin replied :

"I said what I did because, honestly and truly, no other course was open to me. Instead of being received as friends we were put through a regular cross-examination, and in such a tone that I could see the moment coming when we should be obliged to retire."

Before returning to the Tauride Palace to-day they have promised to withdraw as much as they can of yesterday's concessions.

When I went to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs this morning, Miliukov immediately mentioned these most unfortunate concessions :

"How can you expect me," he said, "to resist the demands of our Maximalists when the French socialists themselves abandon the struggle ?"

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, April 17, 1917.*

The Minister of Justice, Kerensky, came to lunch at the Embassy, with Cachin, Montet and Lafont.

Kerensky accepted my invitation only on condition that he could leave the moment the meal was over, as he had to be with the *Soviet* at two o'clock. The essential point was that he should meet my three deputies.

The conversation immediately began with the war. Kerensky told us what is the root of his dispute with Miliukov, *i.e.*, that the Allies must revise their peace terms in order to adapt them to the ideas of the Russian democracy. The arguments with which he supported this theme are those of the "Labour" Party he represents in the Duma, a party which is *par excellence* that of the peasants and takes for its motto the phrase *Lemla i Vola*, "Land and Liberty." Apart from this reservation, he was strong on the necessity of continuing the struggle against German militarism.

We heard him out without too much protest. In any case I suspected that, at the bottom of their hearts, my socialist guests more or less agree with him. As for myself, not yet knowing what attitude Albert Thomas has been instructed to adopt towards Russian socialism, I reserved my opinion.

Hardly had coffee been served before Kerensky fled back to the *Soviet*, where the apostle of international Marxism, the celebrated Lenin, who has come from Switzerland through Germany, was to make his political re-entry.

A disgusting scene was witnessed a few days ago in the Russian Church at Helsingfors. A funeral service was being held for Lieutenant-Commander Polivanov, who was murdered by his crew during the recent disorders. The coffin was open as the orthodox rite prescribes. Suddenly a mob of workmen and sailors burst into the church. The whole lot marched past the catafalque in single file and spat in the dead man's face. The stricken and weeping widow wiped the sullied features with her handkerchief and implored the brutes to cease their infamous behaviour. But, thrusting her roughly aside, they seized the coffin, turned it upside down, emptied out the corpse, the candles

and the wreaths, and left the church bawling the *Marseillaise*.

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, April 18, 1917.*

This morning Miliukov gleefully remarked to me :

"Lenin was a hopeless failure with the *Soviet* yesterday. He argued the pacifist cause so heatedly, and with such effrontery and lack of tact, that he was compelled to stop and leave the room amidst a storm of booing. He will never survive it."

I answered him in Russian fashion : "God grant it !"

But I very much fear that once again Miliukov will prove the dupe of his own optimism. Lenin's arrival is in fact represented to me as the most dangerous ordeal the Russian revolution could have to face.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, April 19, 1917.*

General Brussilov has just sent Prince Lvov this strange telegram :

*The soldiers, officers, generals and civil officials of the South-Western Army, met in conference, have decided to acquaint the Provisional Government with their firm conviction that the place of meeting of the Constituent Assembly should in all fairness be the first capital of the Russian State. Moscow is sacred in the popular mind as the scene of the most important acts in our national history. Moscow is essentially Russian and infinitely dear to the Russian heart. To convoke the Constitutional Assembly at Petrograd, the city whose administrative and cosmopolitan character has always kept it apart from Russian life, would be an illogical and artificial proceeding, opposed to all the aspirations of the Russian people. I associate myself freely and fully with this motion, and in my capacity as a Russian citizen I say that I consider the Petersburgian period of Russian history at an end.*

*BRUSILOV.*

\* \* \*

*Friday, April 20, 1917.*

The French socialist deputies are beginning to be less rapturous about the Russian revolution now that they have

seen it at close quarters. The contemptuous reception given them by the *Soviet* has somewhat cooled their ardour. But they still cherish a colossal number of illusions : they still believe in the possibility of galvanizing the Russian people by a "boldly democratic policy in the direction of internationalism."

I tried to convince them of their error :

"The Russian revolution is essentially anarchic and destructive. Left to itself, it can only end in terrible mob-rule by the lowest classes and the soldiery, in the rupture of all national ties and the total collapse of Russia. In view of the propensity to excess which is innate in the Russian character, it will soon go to extremes : it is doomed to sink into mere destruction and barbarism, horror and absurdity. You have no idea of the magnitude of the forces that have just been released. Whether this catastrophe can still be averted by means such as an immediate meeting of a constituent assembly or a military *coup d'état* I have grave doubts. Fortunately the movement has only begun, so it may be possible to master it, more or less, to put on the brake, to make it take the direction we desire and thus gain time. A respite of a few months would be of incalculable importance to the result of the war. The support you are giving the extremists will precipitate the catastrophe."

But I soon realized that I was speaking to deaf ears : I do not possess the grandiloquence of a Tseretelli or a Cheidze, a Skobelev or a Kerensky.\*

\* \* \*

Saturday, April 21, 1917.

When Miliukov assured me that Lenin had been hope-

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\* In the newspaper, *l'Heure*, of the 5th June, 1918, M. Marsel Cachin gave the following summary of our conversations :

When Montet and I were telling him that it was necessary to make another effort in the democratic direction to try and put Russia on her feet again, M. Paléologue answered pessimistically : "You are deluding yourselves if you think that the Slav people will rise again. On the contrary, it is now doomed to dissolution. From a military point of view you have nothing more to expect from it ; it is going to its destruction ; it is following in its historic path ; anarchy lies in wait for it. For years no one will be able to say what will become of it." Speaking for ourselves, we were unwilling to abandon all faith in the Slav soul.

lessly discredited in the eyes of the *Soviet* by the extravagance of his "defeatism," he was once more the victim of an optimistic illusion.

On the contrary, Lenin's influence seems to have been increasing greatly in the last few days. One point of which there can be no doubt is that he has already gathered round him, or under his orders, all the hot-heads of the revolution ; he is now established as a strong leader.

Born on the 23rd April, 1870, at Simbirsk on the Volga, Vladimir Flitch Ulianov, known as Lenin, is a pure Russian. His father, who belonged to the provincial *petite noblesse*, was employed in the department of education. In 1887 his eldest brother, implicated in a plot against Alexander III, was condemned to death and hung. This tragedy determined the whole course of life of young Vladimir Flitch, who was finishing his education at Kazan University : he threw himself heart and soul into the revolutionary movement. The destruction of tsarism was thereafter an obsession with him, and the gospel of Karl Marx became his breviary. In January, 1897, the police, who were keeping an eye on him, exiled him for three years to Minuschinsk, on the Upper Jenissei, near the Mongolian frontier. On the expiration of his sentence, he was permitted to leave Russia and he made his home in Switzerland, from which he frequently visited Paris. Tireless in his activities, he soon formed an enthusiastic sect which he fired with the cult of international Marxism. During the seditious disorders of 1905 he thought for a moment that his hour had come, and secretly returned to Russia. But the crisis passed ; it was only a prelude, the first stirring of popular passions, and he went back into exile.

Lenin, utopian dreamer and fanatic, prophet and metaphysician, blind to any idea of the impossible or the absurd, a stranger to all feelings of justice or mercy, violent, Machiavelian and crazy with vanity, places at the service of his messianic visions a strong unemotional will, pitiless logic and amazing powers of persuasion and command. Judging by the reports I have received of his first speeches, he is insisting on the revolutionary dictator-

ship of the working and rural masses ; he is preaching that the proletariat has no country and proclaiming his longing for the defeat of the Russian armies. When anyone attacks his crude fancies with some argument drawn from the realm of reality, he replies with the gorgeous phrase : " So much the worse for reality ! " Thus it is mere waste of time to endeavour to convince him that if the Russian armies are destroyed, Russia will become helpless prey in the claws of the German conqueror who, after gorging himself on her, will abandon her to the convulsions of anarchy. The man is all the more dangerous because he is said to be pure-minded, temperate and ascetic. Such as I see him in my mind's eye, he is a compound of Savonarola and Marat, Blanqui and Bakunin.





CHAPTER XII  
APRIL 22—MAY 6, 1917.



## CHAPTER XII

APRIL 22—MAY 6, 1917.

Albert Thomas arrives in Petrograd.—After telling me I am shortly to be recalled, he explains the object of his mission.—His confidence in the revolutionary fervour of the Russian democracy; our views conflict. He sides with Kerensky and against Miliukov in the dispute which has just begun between the Provisional Government and the *Soviet*.—The Grand Duke Paul and the revolution.—Particulars of the captivity of the imperial family.—Public processions: the æsthetic instincts of Russian crowds.—Anarchy makes progress in the public services and the army.—The 1st May; processions and speeches in the Champ-de-Mars.—A "concert-meeting" at the Michael Theatre; political harangues with musical interludes; memories of *The House of the Dead*; romantic speech by Kerensky.—Embitterment of the conflict between the Provisional Government and the *Soviet*; Miliukov's brave resistance; fighting in the streets; Albert Thomas supports Kerensky.—Russia's future; the inevitable consequences of present happenings; a Persian parable.

*Sunday, April 22, 1917.*

At eleven o'clock to-night Albert Thomas arrived at the Finland Station with an impressive escort of officers and secretaries.

From the same train stepped about a score of famous exiles, who have come from France, England and Switzerland; so the station was decorated with red flags. A dense crowd was massed at all the approaches. Numerous delegations, carrying scarlet banners, were grouped at the entrance of the hall and the "Red Guard," which has replaced the civic police, lined the platform with the finest specimens of apaches, sporting red ties and scarves, of which the municipality can boast.

As soon as the train appeared, a storm of cheers burst forth. But the station was badly lit; a clammy and icy fog made the air thick; there was a chaotic accumulation of luggage and boxes all over the place and almost invading the lines, so that the return of the exiles was both triumphal and inauspicious.

Miliukov, Terestchenko and Konovalov went with me

to welcome the French mission. After the official salaams, I led Albert Thomas towards my car, to the accompaniment of a general ovation.

This sight, a great contrast to what he had seen in May, 1916, touched him in his revolutionary fibres. His eyes sparkled as he glanced about him. More than once he said to me :

" *Now* we see the revolution in all its grandeur and beauty ! "

At the Hôtel de l'Europe, where a suite had been reserved for him, we had a talk. I informed him of all that has happened since he left France ; I told him how much worse the situation has become in the last fortnight ; I described the dispute that has arisen between Miliukov and Kerensky, and concluded by emphasizing the considerations that in my opinion compel us to support the Minister for Foreign Affairs because he stands for the policy of the Alliance.

Albert Thomas listened carefully and then countered :

" We must be extremely careful not to offend the Russian democracy. The very reason for my coming is to look into all this. We'll resume the conversation to-morrow."

\* \* \*

*Monday, April 23, 1917.*

I had Miliukov, Terestchenko, Konovalov and Neratov, in addition to my personal staff, to luncheon to-day to meet Albert Thomas.

The three Russian ministers affected to be optimistic. We discussed the formation of two parties in the Government which is becoming increasingly clear. With his usual good temper and great broadmindedness, Miliukov gave his views about the differences of opinion that have arisen between Kerensky and himself. Albert Thomas listened, questioned and said little except to express immense confidence in the Russian revolution and pay it an eloquent and admiring tribute.

When my other guests had left, Albert Thomas asked

to have a talk with me privately in my own room. There he said in serious but friendly tones :

"Monsieur Ribot has given me a letter for you ; he left it to my discretion when I should hand it over to you. I have much too high a regard for you not to give it you at once. Here it is."

It was dated the 13th April. I read it, without the slightest surprise or emotion.\* When I had finished, I said to Albert Thomas :

"There is nothing in this letter with which I do not agree and which I do not highly appreciate. Until my departure, which it will be difficult for me to fix earlier than May 10th, I'll give you all the help in my power."

He shook my hand warmly and replied :

"I shall never forget how dignified your attitude has been, and it will be a pleasure to pay it a tribute in the telegram I am sending to the Government of the Republic to-day."

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*\*Cabinet du Président du Conseil. Ministre des Affaires étrangères.*

Paris, April 13, 1917

*Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,*

The Government has considered it a wise step to send the Minister of Munitions of War to Petrograd on an extraordinary mission. You told me that M. Albert Thomas, in view of the pleasant memories he left behind him in Russia and the influence he may be able to exert in certain quarters, would be well received by the Provisional Government, and particularly M. Miliukov.

In order that he may have a full and fair field for his activities, I should be glad if you would be good enough to return to France on leave, after settling with him the time of your departure. You will hand over the business of the embassy to M. Doulect, who will carry it on as *Chargé d'Affaires* until the appointment of your successor.

It has seemed to the Government that your position of favour with the Emperor would make it more difficult for you to carry on your duties under the present government. You will realize that in new circumstances a new man is required, and you have told me, with a delicacy of feeling I highly appreciate, that you were ready to sacrifice yourself by laying aside all personal considerations. I take this opportunity of thanking you for this proof of your disinterestedness, which does not surprise me in a man like you, and of telling you at the same time that we will not forget the great services you have rendered our country.

When you return to France, we will discuss together what sort of position we can find for you, and do everything in our power to meet your convenience and interest.

With the assurance of my highest regard,

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

A. RIBOT

After drawing up a programme of visits and operations with me, he withdrew.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, April 24, 1917.*

I asked my English and Italian colleagues to lunch with Albert Thomas to-day.

Carlotti declared himself entirely in agreement with me when I maintained that we must support Miliukov against Kerensky and that it would be a grave error of judgment not to place the political and moral authority of the Allied Governments in the scale against the *Soviet*. I concluded with these words :

"With Miliukov and the moderates of the Provisional Government we have still a chance of arresting the progress of anarchy and keeping Russia in the war. Kerensky implies the sure and certain triumph of the *Soviet*, which means giving the rein to all the passions of the mob, the destruction of the army, the rupture of national ties and the end of the Russian State. And if the disintegration of Russia is now inevitable, at least let us refrain from promoting it !"

Supported by Buchanan, Albert Thomas pronounced emphatically in favour of Kerensky :

"The whole strength of the Russian democracy lies in its revolutionary fervour. Kerensky alone is capable of establishing, with the aid of the *Soviet*, a government worthy of our confidence."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, April 25, 1917.*

Albert Thomas and I dined at the British Embassy this evening. But he was in my room as early as half-past seven ; he had come to tell me of a long conversation he had with Kerensky this afternoon, the principal topic of which was the revision of "war aims."

Kerensky had insisted strongly on the necessity of undertaking such a revision, in conformity with the resolution of the *Soviet* ; he thinks that the Allied Governments will lose all their credit with the Russian democracy if they

do not publicly abandon their programme of annexations and indemnities.

"I confess," Albert Thomas said to me, "that I am very much impressed by the force of his arguments and the warmth he puts into his advocacy."

Then, repeating the metaphor Cachin used a day or two ago, he summed up thus :

"We shall be obliged to throw out some ballast."

I argued *contra* that the Russian democracy was rather too inexperienced, ignorant and uneducated to start claiming to dictate to the democracies of France, England, Italy and America, and that what is attacked is the whole policy of the Alliance. He repeated :

"It doesn't matter ! We must throw out some ballast !"

It was now nearly eight o'clock, so we left for the British Embassy.

Among the other guests were Prince and Princess Sergei Bielosselsky, Princess Marie Troubetzkoï, M. and Madame Polovtsov.

Albert Thomas was extraordinarily pleasant and kind and made himself very popular by his wit, his animated and picturesque conversation and total lack of affectation.

Yet two or three times I thought that his candour would have benefited by being more discreet and less expansive and transparent. For instance, he too obviously enjoyed expatiating on his past as a revolutionary, his part in the railway strike of 1911 and the emotional satisfaction he derives from finding himself here in an atmosphere of popular tempest. Perhaps he only talks as he does to avoid any appearance of disowning his political antecedents.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, April 26, 1917.*

Miliukov remarked to me this morning with a wry face :

"You socialists aren't exactly making my task easier !"

Then he told me that Kerensky had boasted to the *Soviet* of having converted everyone, not excepting Albert Thomas, to his own views, and already thinks himself sole director in matters of foreign policy.



“Have you heard of the trick he’s just played me?” he added. “He has got the press to announce, in the form of an official ‘communiqué,’ that the Provisional Government is drafting a note to the Allied Powers, stating in clear and unmistakable language its views on war aims. So it was through the papers that I, the Foreign Minister, first heard of this alleged decision of the Provisional Government. That’s the way I’m treated! They are obviously trying to force my hand. I shall bring the matter up before the Council of Ministers to-night.”

I made the best excuses I could for the behaviour of the socialist deputies and said that they were inspired solely by the idea of smoothing away difficulties.

An hour later I rejoined Albert Thomas at the Embassy and found Kokovtsov who had come for lunch. As on the previous evening, Thomas regaled us on anecdotes from the turbulent period of his political past. But his memories of the incidents he talked about were even more detailed and challenging. He not only tried to avoid the appearance of disowning his past actions but tried to demonstrate that, although he is now a minister of the Government of the Republic, it is as a representative of the Socialist Party. Kokovtsov, who is always politeness itself, took little pleasure in these stories which revolted his instinctive feeling for order and discipline and his reverence for tradition and the hierarchical constitution of society.

After they left me, I thought over the new line which, it is becoming increasingly clear, Albert Thomas means his mission to take, and I decided to send Ribot the following telegram :

*If, as I very much fear, the Russian Government asks us to revise our previous agreements about peace terms, it is my opinion that we must not hesitate to tell them that we stand firmly by those agreements and insist once more on our determination to continue the war to full and final victory.*

*If we do not refuse to enter into the negotiations into which the leaders of the Social Democratic Party, and M. Kerensky*

himself, hope to inveigle us, the consequences may well be irreparable.

The first effect would be to undermine all confidence in those members of the Provisional Government such as Prince Lvov, M. Gutchkov, M. Miliukov, M. Shingarev, etc., who are struggling so heroically to revive Russian patriotism and save the Alliance. We should also paralyse the forces in the rest of the country and the army which have not yet been contaminated by pacifist propaganda. These forces are very slow in reacting against the despotic preponderance of Petrograd because they are ill-organized and scattered, but they are none the less a reserve of national energy which may have an enormous influence on the course of the war.

The determined attitude which I am taking the liberty of recommending to you admittedly involves some risk, in the last resort, of the rupture of the Alliance. But, however serious that eventuality may be, I prefer it to the consequences of the doubtful negotiations which, so I am informed, the Socialist Party is preparing to propose to us. The fact is that, even supposing we had to continue the war without Russia's help, we should be in a position to make our victory yield us a harvest of highly profitable advantages at the expense of our defaulting ally. That prospect is already very seriously agitating a large number of Russian patriots. And if we take the opposite course, I am apprehensive that the Petrograd Soviet will promptly assume control of affairs and, with the complicity of the pacifists of all nations, force a general peace upon us.

Before despatching this telegram, I thought it my duty to read it to Albert Thomas, so I went to see him before dinner at the Hôtel de l'Europe.

He listened, but without surprise as he knows what my views are; but no sooner had I begun than a hard and uncompromising look came into his eyes. When I had finished, he remarked in snappy tones:

"I entirely disagree with you. Are you absolutely set on sending this telegram?"

"Yes; I've thought over it very carefully."

"All right! Send it! But it will be your last!"

I told him that until I was officially relieved of my post it was my duty to supply the Government with information. All that I could do not to impede his mission was to refrain from any kind of action. I added :

"I am sure that the course you are taking is wrong. So when we are talking as man to man, I try to convince you of the mistake and tell you everything that is in my mind. But in conversation with third parties, I assure you I always endeavour to present your views in the best possible light."

"I know you do, and I'm very grateful for it."

As we were separating, he pointed to some books on his table which included some volumes of poems by Alfred de Vigny :

"Those books," he said, "are my regular travelling companions. You see what good taste I have."

We parted with a friendly handshake.

\* \* \*

Friday, April 27, 1917.

Albert Thomas, in his anxiety to define his standpoint, has sent Ribot a long telegram :

*I have raised no objection to M. Paléologue's sending the telegram of yesterday in which he reiterates his belief that Russia will desert us in the near future, and recommends the adoption of a firm attitude. That telegram will be his last. Henceforth I have decided, on my own responsibility, to be the Government's sole source of information and to determine with it the course to be followed.*

*Whatever may be the difficulties—and they are exceedingly formidable—with which the Provisional Government is struggling, and however great the agitation of the anti-annexationist socialists, it seems to me that neither the result of the war nor the fate of the alliance is threatened.*

*In my view, the actual situation is as follows :*

*The socialists are requiring the Government, and more particularly M. Kerensky, to draft a diplomatic note inviting the Allies to revise their war aims in concert. M. Miliukov thinks he cannot yield to this demand. The Government is*

*hesitating between the two courses. I think I shall be able to offer my services in finding some provisional solution which will prevent the present Government from being shaken or breaking up—a point I consider of the very first importance.*

*Even if M. Miliukov should not get his own way and the Provisional Government were to propose that we revise the agreements, I earnestly hope that it will be taken calmly. We shall no doubt see some more incidents, and perhaps even disorders. But all who are in touch with the army assure me that a real improvement in the situation is gradually taking place.*

*With encouragement and action on our side, revolutionary patriotism over here can and must shake itself free. We must not allow an unwise policy to alienate its sympathies from us.*

I saw Albert Thomas again to-day. He said to me :

“I’ve made a point of accurately defining the issues on which our two views are at variance. In a word, what divides us is that you have no faith at all in the merits of the revolutionary forces while I place implicit trust in them.”

“I’m ready to admit that among the Latin and Anglo-Saxon nations, revolutionary forces sometimes have an astonishing power of organization and reconstruction. But with the Slav races they can only be disruptive and destructive : they inevitably lead to anarchy.”

This evening I dined at Tsarkoïe-Selo with the Grand Duke Paul and Princess Paley. It was purely a family party, including the young Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, Vladimir Paley, and the two girls, Irene and Natalia.

It was the first time I had been in the house since the revolution.

The Grand Duke was wearing a general’s uniform, with the St. George’s Cross (though without the imperial monogram) but without the shoulder knots of an aide-de-camp. He has preserved his calm and unaffected dignity, but lines of woe are deeply etched upon his haggard face. The Princess was simply trembling with grief and exasperation.

• Day by day and hour by hour, we reconstructed together the tragic weeks through which we have just passed.

As we traversed the rooms on our way to lunch, the same thought struck us all simultaneously. We feasted our eyes on all this splendour, the pictures, the tapestries, the profusion of furniture and treasures of art. What was the good of all that *now*? What would become of all these marvels and glories? With tears in her eyes, the poor Princess said to me:

“Perhaps this house will be taken from us quite soon—and I’ve put so much of myself into it!”

For the remainder of the evening we were exceedingly depressed; the Grand Duke and his wife are no less pessimistic than myself.

The Princess told me that as she was passing the railings of the Alexander Park yesterday she had a distant glimpse of the Emperor and his daughters. He was passing the time by breaking the ice in a fountain with an iron-shod pole. He had been amusing himself thus for more than an hour! A number of soldiers who were also watching him through the railings, called out: “What’ll you be up to a few days hence, when the ice has melted?” But the Emperor was too far away to hear.

The Grand Duke also told me something:

“The confinement of our unhappy sovereigns has become so rigorous that we know practically nothing of what they are thinking and doing. But last week I had a talk about them with Father Vassiliev, who had just been taking the Easter services in the palace chapel. He told me that he had been left alone with the Emperor several times to carry out his religious duties, and that at first he had found him extremely melancholy and dejected: he spoke in low tones and seemed to be picking his words. But after communion on Holy Thursday, the dear Emperor suddenly recovered his spirits, and two days later his new mood inspired a very touching little scene! No doubt you know that after the Resurrection mass on Easter Eve, all true believers embrace each other to the accompaniment of the words: ‘Christ is risen!’ That night the officer on duty and several men of the guard had

quietly followed the imperial family into the palace chapel. When mass was over, the Emperor went up to these men, who had kept to themselves, and disdaining to regard them now as anything but Christian brothers, he gave them all a reverent kiss on the mouth."

I started back for Petrograd at ten o'clock.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, April 28, 1917.*

As Miliukov told me the day before yesterday, the French socialists, with Albert Thomas to lead them, are making a fine mess of it here!

Disconcerted by the insulting frigidity of the *Soviet's* attitude towards them, they are under the impression that they can soothe its susceptibilities and gain its goodwill by concessions, obsequiousness and flattery. Their latest invention is to make the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine subject to a plebiscite. They are forgetting that Germany would hear nothing of a plebiscite in 1871, and they affect to be unable to see that an appeal to a popular vote which was organized by the German authorities would necessarily be fictitious, and that the condition precedent to a free vote would be the departure of the Germans across the Rhine—so that we must first win the war at any cost. They also seem to ignore the fact that France, in claiming Alsace-Lorraine, is simply asking that a wrong shall be redressed.

Russian society, by which I mean the highest society in the land, is a curious study at the present moment.

I have observed three currents of opinion, or rather three attitudes of mind, towards the revolution.

In principle, all the former *clientèle* of tsarism, by which I mean all families contributing, by virtue of birth or office, to the splendour of the imperial order, have remained loyal to the fallen sovereigns. But I have also observed that I hardly ever hear that loyalty expressed unless coupled with severe, acrimonious, angry and bitter criticisms of the weakness of Nicholas II, the errors of the Empress and the baneful intrigues of their *camarilla*.

As always happens when parties are ejected from power, infinite time is wasted over reminiscences of what has happened, the frantic search for scapegoats and the futile interchange of retrospective hypotheses and personal recrimination. In a political sense, this section, large though it is, will soon cease to count, because it lives on its memories more and more every day, and its only concern with the present is to smother it with sarcasm and invective.

Yet even in these social circles I occasionally derive a different impression, and usually at the close of some evening party when the place-hunters and feather-heads have gone and the conversation takes a more intimate turn. It is then that the possibility of enlisting under the new order is examined in discreet, studied and cautious terms. Is it not making a grave mistake not to support the Provisional Government? Are we not playing the game of the anarchists by refusing the present rulers the help of the conservative forces? Usually there is but a feeble response to this language, a fact which does not make it any less creditable and courageous; for it is inspired by the loftiest patriotism and dictated solely by the realization of public necessities and recognition of the mortal perils with which Russia is menaced. But, so far as I know, not one of those whom I have heard expressing this view has yet dared to cross the Rubicon.

In the higher ranks of society I detect a third attitude towards the new order.

To describe it fittingly would require nothing less than the amusing verve and acid pen of Rivard. I am alluding to the secret activities of certain *salons*, and the manoeuvres of certain *pridvorny*, clever and ambitious officers or officials whom one sees haunting the antechambers of the Provisional Government, offering their help, cadging for jobs, impudently emphasizing what a valuable example their political conversion would be, speculating with calm effrontery in the prestige of their name and the undeniable worth of their administrative or military talents. Some of them seem to me to have done the furcoat business with remarkable speed and agility. As Norvins said in

1814, "I had no idea that snakes could change their skins so quickly." There is nothing like a revolution to lay bare the depths of human nature, to reveal the reverse of the social facade and show up what goes on behind the scenes of the political masquerade.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, April 29, 1917.*

Since the revolutionary drama began, not a day has passed without its ceremonies, processions, charity performances and "triumphs." There has been an uninterrupted series of demonstrations, demonstrations of victory or protest demonstrations, inaugural, expiatory and valedictory. The Slav soul, with its vague and fervent sensibilities, its intuitive notion of the bond of humanity and its violent passion for æsthetic and picturesque emotions, revels and wallows in them. All the clubs and corporations, the political, professional, religious and ethnical associations, have been here to lay their grievances and aspirations before the *Soviet*.

On Easter Monday, the 16th April, I passed, not far from the St. Alexander Nevski Monastery, a long line of pilgrims who were marching to the Tauride Palace, reciting prayers as they went. They carried large red flags on which could be read: "Christ is Risen! Long live the free Church!" or, "A free and democratic Church for a free People!"

The Tauride Gardens have thus witnessed processions of Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, working men and women, peasants of both sexes, school teachers, young apprentices, orphans, deaf mutes and midwives! There has even been a procession of prostitutes! Shades of Tolstoi! What an epilogue to *Resurrection*!

To-day it was the turn of *mutilés* of the war, who came in their thousands to protest against the pacifist theories of the war. At their head was a military band, and the front file carried scarlet banners inscribed thus: "War for liberty to our last breath!" or: "Let not our glorious dead have died in vain!" or: "Look at our wounds!



"They call for victory!" or: "The pacifists are disgracing Russia. Down with Lenin!"

An heroic and pitiable sight! The least damaged of the victims dragged themselves slowly along, keeping line as best they could. Most of them had lost one or more limbs. The worst cases, swathed in bandages, were fixed up on lorries. The blind were led by Red Cross sisters.

This mournful troop seemed a living embodiment of all the horrors of war and to stand for all that human flesh can endure in the way of mutilation and torture. A religious silence greeted them; heads were bared as they passed and eyes filled with tears; a woman in mourning fell to her knees and sobbed as if her heart would break.

At the corner of the Liteiny, where the crowd was thickest and the working-class element best represented, there was loud cheering.

But, alas, I very much fear that among these spectators who came to cheer there is more than one who will go to welcome Lenin to-night. The Russian nation is enthusiastic over "spectacles," whatever their purpose, so long as they affect its emotions and stir its imagination.

\* \* \*

*Monday, April 30, 1917.*

The forces of anarchy are swelling and raging with the uncontrollable force of an equinoctial tide.

All discipline has vanished in the army. Officers are everywhere being insulted, ragged and—if they object—massacred. It is calculated that more than 1,200,000 deserters are wandering over Russia, filling the stations, storming the carriages, stopping the trains, and thus paralysing all the military and civil transport services. At junctions in particular they seem positively to swarm. A train arrives: they make its occupants get out, take their places and compel the stationmaster to switch the train off in any direction they like. Or it may be a train laden with troops for the front. The men get out at some station, arrange a meeting, confer together for an hour or two, and wind up by demanding to be taken back to their starting point.

In the Civil Service there is no less disorder. The heads have lost all authority over their subordinates, who in any case spend most of their time in speechifying in the *Soviets* or demonstrating in the streets.

Of course the food shortage shows no sign of improvement, if indeed it is not getting worse. And yet there are in the stations of Petrograd four thousand wagons loaded with flour. But the lorry drivers refuse to work. Then the *Soviet* publishes an eloquent appeal:

*"Comrade Lorry-drivers!*

*"Do not imitate the infamies of the old regime! Do not let your brothers die of hunger! Unload the wagons!"*

The comrade lorry-drivers answer as one man: "We will not unload the wagons, because it is not our pleasure to do so. We are free!"

Then when the day comes in which it pleases the comrade lorry-drivers to unload the wagons of flour, it is the turn of the bakers to refuse to work. Then the *Soviet* publishes an eloquent appeal:

*"Comrade Bakers!*

*"Do not imitate the infamies of the old regime! Do not let your brothers die of hunger! Make bread!"*

The comrade bakers answer as one man: "We will not make bread, because it is not our pleasure to do so. We are free!"

In the streets many of the *izvochtchiks* are refusing to keep to the left, because they are free. But as they are not agreed about it, the result is continual collision.

The police, which was the main, if not the only, framework of this enormous country, has simply ceased to exist, for the "Red Guard," a kind of municipal militia instituted in some of the large cities, is nothing but a hoard of outcasts and apaches. And as all the prisons have been opened, it is miraculous that more attacks on persons and property have not been reported.

Yet agrarian disorder is greatly on the increase,

particularly in the districts of Kursk, Voronej, Tambov and Saratov.

One of the oddest signs of the general derangement is the attitude of the *Soviets* and their following towards the prisoners of war.

At Schlusselfburg the German prisoners are allowed to go about unattended in the town. Within a distance of five versts from the front one of my officers has seen bodies of Austrian prisoners walking about without let or hindrance. To crown everything, a regional conference of German, Turkish and Austro-Hungarian prisoners has demanded—and successfully—that the “eight-hour day” should be applied to them!”

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, May 1, 1917.*

According to the orthodox calendar to-day is the 18th April; but the *Soviet* has decided that we shall nationally adopt the Western style so as to fall in time with the proletariats of all countries and illustrate the international solidarity of the working classes, in spite of the war and the illusions of the bourgeoisie.

During the last few days preparations have been in progress for a colossal demonstration on the Champ-de-Mars. The weather has not been favourable. The sky has been livid, the wind cold and biting, and the Neva, which had begun to thaw, has piled up its floes again.

From early morning all the bridges and avenues have been thronged with processions proceeding towards the centre of the city, processions of workmen, soldiers, *moujiks*, women, and children, each preceded by tall red banners which had a fierce struggle with the wind.

Perfect order prevailed. The long snaky lines advanced, retreated and manœuvred as easily as a troop of supers on the stage. The Russian people has a rare sense of theatrical effect.

About eleven o'clock I went to the Champ-de-Mars with my secretaries, Chambrun and DuLong.

The huge square was like a human ocean in which the swaying of the crowd resembled the motion of waves.

Thousands of red flags fluttered above these living billows. A dozen military orchestras, distributed at various points, made the welkin ring with the strains of the *Marseillaise*, alternating with operatic and dance selections. You cannot have a ceremony in Russia without music.

Nor can you have a ceremony without speeches. So the *Soviet* had posted at fixed intervals motor lorries, hung with red cloth, to serve as platforms. Orators followed each other in endless succession, all of them men of the people, whether wearing the workman's jacket, the soldier's greatcoat, the peasant's sheepskin, the priest's cassock or the Jew's gabardine. They spoke as if they would never stop, gesticulating vigorously. The audience gave them the closest attention. There was no interruption and everyone listened with glazed eye and strained ear to these naive, grave, confused and fervent outpourings, replete with illusions and dreams, which have been germinating for centuries in the inarticulate soul of the Russian people. The subject of most of the speeches was social reforms and the partition of the land. The war was only mentioned incidentally, and as an affliction which will soon end in a brotherly reconciliation of all the nations. I spent an hour walking about the Champ-de-Mars and in that time counted about thirty-two banners bearing inscriptions such as: "*Down with the War! . . . Long Live the Internationale! . . . We want Liberty, Land and Peace!*"

As I was returning to the Embassy I passed Albert Thomas, escorted by "Russian comrades"; his face fairly beamed with revolutionary enthusiasm. As we met, he burst out:

"Isn't it splendid! Perfectly splendid!"

It was certainly a splendid spectacle; but I should appreciate its beauty more if there were no war, France were not invaded and the Germans had not been in Lille and Saint-Quentin for the past thirty-two months.

Not until evening did the processions cease to file into the Champ-de-Mars and the orators to follow each other in unbroken succession on the platforms draped in scarlet.

To-day has made a very deep impression upon me; it marks the end of a social order and the collapse of a

world. The Russian revolution is composed of elements too discordant, illogical, subconscious and ignorant for anyone to judge at the present time what its historical significance may be or its power of self-diffusion. But if one thinks of the world drama of which it forms part, there is a temptation to apply to it the remark which Joseph de Maistre, in this very city, made about the French Revolution: "It is not a revolution but an epoch."

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, May 2, 1917.*

A "concert-meeting" took place at the Michael Theatre this evening: the proceeds are earmarked for the assistance of former political prisoners. Several ministers were present and Miliukov and Kerensky were down to speak. I accompanied Albert Thomas in the great front box which used to be the imperial box.

After a symphonic prelude of Tchaikovsky, Miliukov made a speech, a speech glowing with patriotism and energy. It was received with approving cheers from the gallery to the stalls.

After him Kousnietzova appeared on the stage. Shrouded in her tragic beauty, she sang the great air from *Tosca* in her voluptuous and moving voice. The applause was vociferous.

But even before the audience had calmed down, a hirsute, sinister and fierce-eyed figure rose from a box and yelled out angrily:

"I want to speak against the war, and in favour of peace!"

Uproar. Shouts from all sides:

"Who are you? Where have you come from? What were you doing before the revolution?"

The man hesitated in answering. Then he suddenly folded his arms and thundered out as if in defiance of his audience:

"I've come from Siberia; I was in prison!"

"Oh! Were you a political prisoner?"

"No, I was an ordinary criminal; but I had my conscience on my side!"

This answer, fully worthy of Dostoïevski, aroused a tempest of cheers :

“Hurrah ! Hurrah ! . . . Speak ! Speak !”

He jumped out of the box. He was seized, raised aloft and carried to the stage over the heads of those sitting in the stalls.

Albert Thomas, sitting next to me, was in the seventh heaven of delight. His face beaming, he snatched my hand and whispered :

“It’s absolutely glorious ! Wonderfully beautiful !”

The convict began by reading letters he had received from the front to the effect that all the Germans ask is to fraternize with their Russian comrades. He developed his theme, but expressed himself awkwardly and groped for his words. The audience was bored and became noisy.

At that moment Kerensky turned up. He was received with cheers and asked to speak at once.

The convict, whom everyone had forgotten, protested vigorously. A few hearty blows convinced him that his presence on the stage was superfluous. He shook his fist and vanished into the wings.

But before Kerensky began his speech, a tenor appeared and sang some of Glazounov’s popular airs. As he had a delightful voice and his diction was excellent, the audience, which was now feeling sentimental again, had him back for three more songs.

At length Kerensky occupied the stage ; he was even paler than usual and seemed utterly worn out. In a few words he knocked the convict’s argument to pieces. But as if another train of thought had passed through his mind, he suddenly gave utterance to the following odd conclusion :

“If you will not believe in me and follow me, I shall give up power. I will never use force to secure the acceptance of my opinions . . . . When a country means to cast itself into the gulf, no human power can prevent it and those who conduct its government have only one course open to them—to retire.”

As he was coming down from the stage with a tired and dispirited air, I turned his strange theory over in my mind

and felt like replying: "When a country means to cast itself into the gulf, the duty of its rulers is not to retire but to place themselves in its path even at the risk of their lives."

There was another orchestral item and at length came the turn of Albert Thomas to speak. In a short and vehement speech, he greeted the proletariat of Russia and boasted of the patriotism of the French socialists; he again proclaimed the necessity of victory, in the very interest of the future of society, and so forth.

At least nine-tenths of the audience did not understand him. But his voice was so sonorous, his eyes flashed forth such fire, and his gestures were so superb that a torrent of frantic and approving cheers greeted the conclusion of his speech.

\* \* \*

*Thursday, May 3, 1917.*

Yielding to the pressure of the *Soviet*, Kerensky and, unfortunately, Albert Thomas too, Miliukov has bowed to the necessity of informing the Allied Governments of the manifesto issued on the 9th April to enlighten the Russian nation about the views of the Government of free Russia on the subject of war aims, a manifesto which can be summarized in the famous expression: "No annexations, no indemnities." But he has added an explanatory note which, couched in intentionally vague and diffuse terms, does what is possible to counteract the arguments of the manifesto.

The *Soviet* has been sitting all night, proclaiming its determination to have this note withdrawn and make Miliukov "harmless" in future. In fact, a fierce dispute with the Government is in progress.

There has been much excitement in the streets since early morning. Groups have gathered at all points to listen to impromptu speeches. About two o'clock the character of the demonstrations became more serious. A collision between Miliukov's supporters and opponents took place in front of Our Lady of Kazan and the former gained the day.

Before long the regiments of the garrison emerged from their barracks and marched through the streets of the city, shouting: "Down with Miliukov! Down with the war!"

The Government is in permanent session at the Marie Palace, having firmly decided that this time it will make no further concessions to the tyranny of the extremists. Kerensky alone has refrained from taking any part in its deliberations; he feels that his position as Vice-President of the *Soviet* leaves him no other course.

This evening the agitation became more intense. More than 25,000 armed men and a huge mob of workmen collected round the Marie Palace.

The Government's position is critical; but its resolution has not wavered. From the top of the steps which give a splendid view of the Marie and St. Isaac Squares, Miliukov, General Kornilov and Rodzianko have been bravely haranguing the crowd.

At length a rumour began to spread that the Tsarskoïe-Selo regiments, which have remained faithful to the Government, are marching on Petrograd. The *Soviet* seems to think it is true, as it hastily issued an order that the demonstrations are to cease. What will happen to-morrow?

I have been thinking all day over the lamentable mistake Albert Thomas has made in supporting Kerensky against Miliukov. In view of his persistence in what may be called "the revolutionary illusion," I decided to-night to send Ribot the following telegram:

*The gravity of the events in progress and the sense of my responsibility compel me to ask you to confirm by direct and express order that you have instructed M. Albert Thomas I am not to communicate with you.*

\* \* \*

Friday, May 4, 1917.

About ten o'clock this morning Albert Thomas came to the Embassy as usual: I immediately told him of yesterday's telegram.



• He flew into a rage. Striding up and down, he treated me to a torrent of reproach and invective.

But the storm was too violent to last.

After a moment's silence, he crossed the room twice, frowning fiercely, his arms folded and his lips moving as if he were talking to himself. Then his face cleared up, and in a calmer tone he asked :

"What is your objection to my policy ? "

"I don't find any difficulty in answering you," I said. "Yours is a mind formed in the socialistic and revolutionary school ; you are also very emotional and possess oratorical imagination. You have arrived here in highly inflammable, stirring and intoxicating surroundings and you've been captured by your *milieu*."

"Can't you see I'm always keeping a tight hold on myself ? "

"Yes, but there are times when you let yourself go. The other night, at the Michael Theatre, for instance. . . ."

Our talk continued in the same strain, incidentally leaving us both exactly where we were before.

• Stormy yesterday was unquestionably a triumph for the Government over the *Soviet*. I have had confirmation of the report that the Tsarskoïe-Selo garrison had threatened to march on Petrograd.

During this afternoon there have been renewed demonstrations.

Whilst I was having tea with Madame P—— on the Moïka about five o'clock, we heard a great din coming from the Nevsky Prospekt, followed by the sound of rifle fire. Fighting was in progress before Our Lady of Kazan.

As I was returning to the Embassy I passed some armed bands of Leninists who were yelling : "Long live the *Internationale*! Down with Miliukov! Down with the war!"

Bloody collisions continued in the evening.

But the *Soviet* has taken fright, as it did yesterday. It is afraid of finding itself thrust on one side and supplanted by Lenin. It is also afraid that the Tsarskoïe-Selo troops will march on the city ; so it has hastily

issued posters with an appeal for restraint and order, "to save the revolution from the catastrophe with which it is threatened."

By midnight peace had been restored.

\* \* \*

*Saturday, May 5, 1917.*

The city now wears its wonted appearance.

But, judging from the arrogant tone of the extremist press, the Government's victory is a precarious one: the days of Miliukov, Gutchkov and Prince Lvov are numbered.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, May 6, 1915.*

I have had a talk with the great metallurgist and financier, Pertilov; we exchanged gloomy forecasts of the inevitable consequences of present events.

"A Russian revolution," I said, "can only be disruptive and destructive, because the first effect of a revolution is to liberate popular instincts, and the instincts of the Russian people are essentially anarchic. Never before have I so well understood the prayer wrung out of Pushkin by Pugatchev's adventure: *May God spare us the sight of another Russian revolution, a thing of horror and absurdity!*"

"You're familiar with my views on the subject. I believe Russia is entering upon a very, very long period of disorder, misery and ruin."

After a moment's solemn silence, he continued with a very tense expression:

"*Monsieur l'Ambassadeur*, I'll answer your question with a Persian parable:

"In the plains of Khorassan there was once a great drought, from which the cattle suffered cruelly. A shepherd, seeing his sheep on the point of death, sought out a famous sorcerer and said to him: 'Thou art clever and powerful: canst thou not make the grass of my fields grow again?' 'Nothing easier,' replied the other. 'It will cost you only two tomans.' A bargain was

struck on the spot, and the magician proceeded at once to his incantations. But neither on the next day nor the days following could the smallest cloud be seen in the sky; the ground became harder and harder; the sheep continued to starve and die. In his alarm the shepherd soon returned to the sorcerer, who overwhelmed him with words of comfort and counsels of patience. But the drought still continued and the ground became utterly baked up. Then the shepherd became desperate, rushed back to the sorcerer and asked him anxiously: 'Are you quite sure you can make the grass of my fields grow again?' 'Absolutely; I've done things far more difficult hundreds of times! I'll guarantee that your fields will be green again. But I cannot guarantee that between now and then your sheep will not all be dead.' "

CHAPTER XIII  
MAY 7—17, 1917.



## CHAPTER XIII

MAY 7—17, 1917.

Albert Thomas and I state our conflicting arguments about the character of the Russian revolution and submit them to the Government of the Republic.—A farewell visit to the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch: "Marked down for the gallows." . . .—Kerensky's sway over the French socialist deputies; the magic power of his eloquence.—Lenin and the *monijiks*: symptoms of an agrarian crisis.—I bid farewell to Russian society. A last look at the statue of Peter the Great.—I leave Petrograd in company with the socialist deputies, Cachin and Montet.—Finland "of the thousand lakes."—A conversation with the socialist deputies on the conclusions to be drawn from the Russian revolution: they think that a peace ought to be negotiated in accordance with the principles of the *Internationale*.—Crossing the Tornea on the ice: a convoy of wounded in distress.—The melancholy prophecy of the *yoursodivi* in *Boris Godunov*: "Weep, my beloved Russia, weep! for thou art about to perish!"

*Monday, May 7, 1917.*

To my telegram of the 3rd May, Ribot has replied by asking Albert Thomas and myself to give him our respective opinions.

"Draw up your argument," Albert Thomas said to me; "I'll then draw up mine and we'll send them as they are to the Government."

These are my views:

1. Anarchy is spreading all over Russia and will paralyse her for a long time to come. The quarrel between the Provisional Government and the *Soviet* shows, by the very length of time it has lasted, that both are important. It is increasingly clear that disgust with the war, abandonment of all the national dreams and a lack of interest in everything save domestic problems are becoming uppermost in the public mind. Cities like Moscow, which a short time past were hot-beds of patriotic feeling, have been contaminated. The revolutionary democracy seems

incapable of restoring order in the country and organizing it for the struggle.

2. Ought we to continue to put our trust in Russia and give her more time? No; because even under the most favourable circumstances she will not be in a condition to carry out all her obligations as an ally for many months to come.

3. Sooner or later, the more or less complete paralysis of Russia's effort will compel us to revise the decisions we had all come to on Eastern questions. The sooner the better, as the prolongation of the war involves France in terrible sacrifices of which Russia has not borne her share for a long time past.

4. We must therefore waste no further time but endeavour in all secrecy to find some means of inducing Turkey to propose peace to us. This line of thought necessarily excludes the idea of any reply to the latest note of the Provisional Government, as such a reply would to some extent confirm agreements which have become unrealizable through Russia's fault.

I will now give the views of Albert Thomas :

1. I admit that the situation is difficult and uncertain, but not that it is desperate, as M. Paléologue seems to think.

2. I believe that the best policy is to give the new Russia that confidence we did not refuse to the old.

3. The Government will have to decide about the Eastern policy now put forward by M. Paléologue. I will content myself with the remark that this is not perhaps a well-chosen moment for great new diplomatic combinations in the East. But I have pleasure in observing that, in advising no reply to the Provisional Government's recent note, M. Paléologue himself takes a step in the direction of the revision of agreements. Speaking for myself, I am not opposed to the idea of a strictly secret attempt to induce Turkey to propose peace to us. The only difference between M. Paléologue and myself is that I still believe in the possibility of bringing Russia back into the war by announcing a democratic policy; M.

Paléologue thinks that the last chance of attaining that end has gone.

4. Our friendly discussion will put the Government in a better position to view the situation as a whole. I remain of opinion that the policy I suggest is not only the more prudent of the two but more in accordance with things as they are. Nor does it rule out the Turkish scheme; but it strives to bring it about by agreement with the new Russia and not in opposition to her.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, May 8, 1917.*

I have paid a farewell visit to the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovitch.

Not much left of the splendid optimism he affected at the dawn of the new order. He made no attempt to conceal his grief and anxiety. But he still cherishes a hope for some improvement in the near future, which he thinks would be followed by a general recovery and definite revival.

But his voice trembled as he took me through the saloons to the vestibule:

"When we meet again," he said, "where will Russia have got to? . . . Shall we ever meet again?"

"You're in a very gloomy mood, Monseigneur."

"How can you expect me to forget that I'm marked down for the gallows?"

\* \* \*

*Wednesday, May 9, 1917.*

I have already said that the four representatives of French socialism, Albert Thomas, Lafont, Cachin and Montet, have had a university and classical training, a fact which makes them peculiarly responsive to the influence of oratory and the magic of rhetoric and style. Hence Kerensky's curious ascendancy over them.

I must certainly admit that the *Soviet's* young tribune is extraordinarily eloquent. Even his least prepared



speech is notable for its wealth of vocabulary, range of ideas, rhythm of phrasing, amplitude of period, the lyrical quality of its metaphors and the dazzling flow of words. And what amazing inflections of voice! What elasticity in his attitude and expression! He is successively haughty and familiar, playful and impetuous, domineering and soothing, cordial and sarcastic, bantering and inspired, lucid and mysterious, trivial and dithyrambic. He plays on all the strings and his genius has all forces and artifices at its command.

No idea of his eloquence can be gained by simply reading his speeches, for his physical personality is perhaps the most effective element of his power to fascinate the crowd. He must be heard in one of those popular meetings in which he harangues his audience nightly as Robespierre used to harangue the Jacobins. There is nothing more impressive than to see him appear on the platform with his pallid, fevered, hysterical and contorted countenance.

In his eyes is a look which is misty at one moment and in the next evasive, all but impenetrable between the half-closed lids, or piercing, challenging and flashing. The same contrasts can be observed in his voice, which is usually cavernous and raucous, with sudden explosions of marvellous stridence and sonority. And then from time to time a mysteriously prophetic or apocalyptic inspiration transfigures the orator and seems to radiate from him in magnetic waves. The fierce intensity of his features, the flow of words, alternately halting and torrential, the sudden vagaries of his train of thought, the somnambulistic deliberation of his gestures, the fixity of his gaze and his twitching lips and bristling hair make him look like a monomaniac or one possessed. At such times his audience shudders visibly. All interruptions cease; all opposition is brushed aside; individual wills melt into nothingness and the whole assembly communes together in a sort of hypnotic trance.

But what is there behind this theatrical grandiloquence and these platform and stage triumphs? Nothing but Utopian fantasies, low comedy and self-infatuation.

Thursday, May 10, 1917.

Countess Adam Lamoyska, who arrived here from Kiev yesterday, tells me that she dare not return to her family place at Petchara, in Podolia, which has been her refuge since the invasion of Poland; a dangerous agitation is on foot among the peasants.

"Hitherto," she told me, "they have all been faithful and attached to my mother, who has certainly done everything she could for them. But since the revolution everything has changed. We see them standing about at the castle gate or in the park, pretending to divide up our lands in dumb show. One of them will affect to want the wood by the river; another puts in for the gardens and proposes to turn them into folds. They go on talking like that for hours and do not stop even when my mother, one of my sisters or myself go up to them."

The same attitude is observable in all the provinces, so it is clear that Lenin's propaganda among the peasants is beginning to bear fruit.

In the eyes of the *moujiks* that great reform of 1861, the emancipation of the serfs, has always been regarded as a prelude to the general expropriation they have been obstinately expecting for centuries; their idea is that the partition of all land, the *tcherny peredel*, or "black partition," as they call it, is due to them by virtue of a natural, imprescriptible and primordial right. Lenin's apostles have an easy task in persuading them that the hour for this last act of justice is at length about to strike.

\* \* \*

Friday, May 11, 1917.

I lunched at the Italian Embassy with Miliukov, Buchanan, Bratiano (the President of the Rumanian Council), who has just arrived in Petrograd to confer with the Provisional Government, Prince Scipio Borghese, Count Nani Mocenigo, and others.

For the first time Miliukov seemed to me shaken in his brave optimism and his confidence and pugnacity. In conversation he affects more or less his old assurance; but the dull tones of his voice and his haggard look reveal

only too clearly the gnawing anxiety within. We were all struck by it.

After luncheon Bratiano remarked to me in a woe-begone tone :

"We shall lose Miliukov before long. . . . It will be Gutchkov's turn next, then Prince Lvov, then Shingarev.

. . . After that the Russian revolution will sink into anarchy, and we Rumanians will be lost ! "

Tears stood in his eyes ; but he suddenly flung up his head and recovered himself.

Nor did Carlotti or Prince Borghese conceal their anxiety. The paralysis which has overtaken the Russian army must necessarily release a large number of Austrian and German divisions. Will not those divisions be transferred to the Trentino or the Isonzo to resume the terrible offensive of last May, and in even greater force ?

\* \* \*

*Saturday, May 12, 1917.*

My company of Russian friends has already been widely scattered. Some have gone to take up residence in Moscow, hoping to find the atmosphere there less stormy. Others have retired to their estates, with the idea that their presence will have a good moral effect on the peasants. Others have emigrated to Stockholm.

But for all that I managed to raise a company of a dozen or so for a last dinner this evening.

Everyone seemed absorbed in his thoughts ; conversation lagged, and the atmosphere was doleful.

Before leaving, all my guests gave utterance to the same sentiment : "To us your departure marks the end of an order. So we shall have long and happy memories of your term of office."

The news of the Russian army is bad. The practice of fraternization with the German soldiers is making headway all along the front.

\* \* \*

*Sunday, May 13, 1917.*

After several farewell visits at various points on the

English Quay, I passed Falconet's monument of Peter the Great. It was bound to be my last chance of seeing this superb evocation of the Tsar legislator and conqueror, a masterpiece of equestrian statuary; so I had my car stopped.

During the three and a half years in which I have been living on the banks of the Neva, I have never tired of admiring the imperious effigy of the proud autocrat, the haughty assurance of his features, the despotic force of his gestures, the fine fury of his prancing horse, the marvellous animation of both man and beast, the plastic beauty of the whole group and the grandeur of the architectural substructure.

But to-day one thought and one alone obsessed me. If Peter Alexeievitch could come back to life for a moment, could anything describe his passionate grief on beholding the ruin, or approaching ruin, of his work, the repudiation of his inheritance, the abandonment of his dreams, the dissolution of his empire and the end of Russia's power!

\* \* \*

*Monday, May 14, 1917.*

The War Minister, Gutchkov, has sent in his resignation on the ground that he is powerless to change the conditions under which supreme authority is held, "conditions which threaten to have consequences fatal to the liberty, safety, and indeed the very existence, of Russia."

Generals Gourko and Brussilov have asked to be relieved of their commands.

This means the final bankruptcy of Russian liberalism and the approaching triumph of the *Soviet*.

\* \* \*

*Tuesday, May 15, 1917.*

Miliukov gave a farewell luncheon to me, to which the Marquis Carloti, Albert Thomas, Sazonov, Neratov, Tatischev, etc., were invited.

Gutchkov's resignation and alarmist protest have made them all very gloomy.

The tone in which Miliukov thanked me for the help I have given him made me certain that he too feels that his hour has come.

During the last few weeks the Provisional Government has been pressing Sazonov to take up his embassy in London. But he had evaded complying with its request, being apprehensive—only too naturally—about what he would leave behind him and the line of policy Petrograd would impose upon him. In deference to Miliukov's personal request, he has given way and agreed to go.

We leave together to-morrow morning.

The British Admiralty is to send a swift despatch-boat and two destroyers to convey us from Bergen to Scotland.

\* \* \*

Between Petrograd and Bielo-Ostrov,

*Wednesday, May 16, 1917.*

When I reached the Finland Station this morning, I found Sazonov by the carriage which had been reserved for us. In grave tones he said to me:

"All our plans are changed; I'm not coming with you. . . . Read this!"

He gave me a letter, dated the same night and just put in his hands, in which Prince Lvov asked him to postpone his departure as Miliukov had sent in his resignation.

"I go and you stay behind," I said. "Isn't it symbolical?"

"Yes, it marks the end of a political era! . . . Miliukov's presence was a last guarantee of fidelity to our diplomatic tradition. What could I do in London now? I very much fear that the immediate future will show Monsieur Albert Thomas what a mistake he has made in siding so openly with the *Soviet* against Miliukov!"

The arrival of friends, who had come to see me off, put an end to our conversation.

The two French socialist deputies, Cachin and Montet, and the two delegates of English socialism, O'Grady and Thorne, then entered the train. They had come straight from the Tauride Palace where they had spent the whole night conferring with the *Soviet*.

The train left at 7-40 a.m.

\* \* \*

Haparanda,

Thursday, May 17, 1917.

We spent the whole of yesterday crossing Finland "of the thousand lakes."

The moment the frontier was passed, how far we felt from Russia! In every town, and even the smallest village, the appearance of the houses with their clean windows, spotless shutters, shiny tiled floors and straight fences, indicated decency, order, domestic economy, a sense of comfort and home. Under the grey sky the landscape was deliciously pretty and varied, particularly towards evening, when we were between Tavastehus and Tammerfors. The woods, gardens and meadows wore their young spring green; the rivers tumbled along with a happy murmur, and the limpid lakes were streaked with dark shadows.

Near Uleaborg, this morning, nature assumed a sterner mood. Here and there snowdrifts lay scattered over a barren heath, where scraggy birch trees fought for their lives against a hostile climate. The rivers foamed in their beds, carrying down huge ice-floes.

Cachin and Montet joined me for a talk in my compartment.

Montet, who had been sullen and self-absorbed since we left Petrograd, suddenly challenged me with:

"Fundamentally, the Russian revolution is right. It is not so much a political as an international revolution. The *bourgeois*, capitalist and imperialist classes have plunged the world into a frightful crisis they are now

unable to overcome. Peace can only be brought about in accordance with the principles of the Internationale. I have come to a very clear conclusion : I've been thinking about it all night : the French socialists must go to the Stockholm Conference to summon a full assembly of the Internationale and draw up the general scheme of peace terms."

Cachin protested :

"But if the German social democracy refuses the *Soviet's* invitation, it will be a disaster for the Russian revolution ; and France will be involved in that disaster !"

Montet continued :

"We gave tsarism a pretty long term of credit ; we mustn't be stingy with our confidence in the new régime. The *Soviet* has assured us that if the Entente will honestly revise its war aims and the Russian army knows that it is now fighting for a genuinely democratic peace, a splendid national revival throughout Russia will result which will be a guarantee of our victory."

I endeavoured to convince him that the *Soviet's* assurance was quite worthless, because the *Soviet* can no longer control the mob passions it has released :

"Look at what is happening at Kronstadt and Schlussemburg—only thirty-five versts from Petrograd. At Kronstadt, the commune is master of the town and forts ; two-thirds of the officers have been massacred ; a hundred and twenty officers are still under lock and key, and a hundred and fifty are compelled to sweep the streets every day. At Schlussemburg, too, the commune reigns supreme, but with the assistance of German prisoners of war who have formed themselves into a trade union and impose their will on the workshops. Faced with this intolerable situation, the *Soviet* is utterly helpless. Admitted, for the sake of argument, that Kerensky succeeds in restoring the semblance of discipline among the troops and even galvanizing them into action, how on earth is he to cope with the administrative disorganization, the agrarian movement, the financial crisis, the economic débâcle, the universal spread of strikes and the progress of

separatism? . . . I tell you, even a Peter the Great would not suffice!"

Montet asked me:

"Is it really your opinion that the Russian army is incapable of any effort?"

"I believe it is still possible to get the Russian army in hand again, and even that it could undertake certain secondary operations before long. But any intense and continuous action, such as a mighty and sustained offensive, is now out of its power owing to the anarchy in its rear. That's why I attach no importance to the sudden national revival the *Soviet* has promised you; it would simply be a futile demonstration. So the only effect of the pilgrimage to Stockholm would be to demoralize and divide the Allies."

About half-past twelve the train stopped at some tumbledown sheds in a desolate and deserted region. We had reached Torneo.

While the police and customs formalities were in progress, Cachin remarked, pointing to the red flag flying over the station—a dirty, faded, tattered flag:

"Our revolutionary friends might at least afford a newer flag to display at the frontier."

To which Montet replied, with a smile:

"Don't mention the red flag; you'll upset the Ambassador."

"Upset me? Not in the least. The Russian revolution can have any flag it likes, even a black flag, provided it is an emblem of power and order. But just look at that rag, which was once purple. It's a fitting symbol of the new Russia: a dirty bit of cloth falling in pieces!"

The Torneo, which is the frontier here, was still ice-bound. I crossed it on foot, behind the sledges taking my luggage to Haparanda.

A lugubrious procession passed us—a convoy of Russian wounded, all serious cases, coming from Germany through Sweden. As might be expected, the transport collected to receive them was wholly inadequate, and about a hundred stretchers were laid on the ice, on which these



wretched human relics shivered under a thin blanket. What a return to their native land! . . . But will they even have a native land to return to?

With a final glance backward, I repeated the doleful prophecy with which a village idiot, a *yurodivi*, ends the revolt scene in *Boris Godunov*: "Weep, my holy Russia, weep! For thou art entering into darkness. Weep, my holy Russia, weep! For thou shalt shortly die."

THE END

END OF VOLUME III.